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Olga Bertelsen (ed.)

Russian Active Measures

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

With a foreword by Jan Goldman

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Foreword

We live in perilous times as the information revolution bends its arc to backfire on democratic institutions. European countries that only in the last few decades have recaptured their freedom and independence after several generations either directly or indirectly under the control of the Soviet Union were partially liberated with the rise of fiber optic and digital information technology.

President Mikhail Gorbachev's decision to loosen the Soviet bondage on Eastern Europe's countries created the independence and democratic momentum that led to the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, and the overthrow of Communist rule throughout Eastern Europe. During this time, the unplanned but powerful interplay of bureaucratic interests and other institutional forces that operated in the Soviet Union made it difficult to foretell the close linkage between the information revolution and their citizens' longing for freedom and democracy. It assumed that the information revolution would whet citizens' appetites to taste self-independence. It was not long ago when the repressive regimes were frightened that "copy machines" would become accessible to ordinary citizens, allowing them to create their independent newspapers. State-sponsored propaganda for the masses was antithetical to the spreading of independent thought from its citizens. The once-powerful Communist-party bureaucrats would later ask at the cusp of the communication and cyber revolution that if Soviet society would produce *samizdat* (self-publication), can it also produce *samoinformatizatsiia* (self-informatization)? The upheaval in wireless communication was led by infrared, satellite, microwave transmissions, resulting in mobile phones and the ability to randomly assemble people using global positioning satellites.

Since then, the communist-led Soviet Union has been replaced with an authoritarian consumer-driven society directed by the corrupt Russian leadership. It was during that transformation that East European countries began their liberation and their conversion to independence. This led to the blossoming of information relying on

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modern and universally accessible telecommunication systems capable of supporting voice, data, and video information. Democratic values thrive on the free flow of information spreading throughout the world.

Unfortunately, today, the reignition of Russian expansion goals has led to an attack on those countries that are perceived as a threat to the inhabitants inside the Kremlin. The Russian government has learned that a government can inhibit information in a democratic society, and while it cannot completely shut it off, it can stunt its growth or prevent it from spreading. Rather than guns, troops, and tanks, Russia uses social media and the growing availability of software bots and other tools for manipulating video and other online content to conduct broad disinformation campaigns.

This book is an account of Russia's attacks on the liberties of democratic states. It contains chapters on the history of Russian active measures, strategies, and tactics of the assault these countries must endure from their larger and more threatening neighbor in this new type of warfare. I would encourage everyone who supports the freedom to transmit their ideas, regardless of political boundaries, to read this important book.

Dr. Jan Goldman
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Introduction
A Blind Spot of Active Measures

Olga Bertelsen

Thousands of books have examined the traditions, methods, and special operations employed by the Soviet/Russian secret police against Soviet/Russian citizens, the West, and the Third World. They have been published since the 1920s, including detailed narratives by intelligence officers, their victims, observers, and scholars who described, analyzed, and guessed the degrees of violence and sophistication of overt and covert operations employed by the *chekists*.[1] Thanks to these accounts and historical analyses, the international community learned a great deal about Soviet/Russian intelligence operations designed to suppress internal and external enemies. The KGB, FSB, and GRU have become internationally recognized agencies, associated with disinformation, assassinations, and

1 The term *chekists* refers to those who worked/work for the Soviet/Russian secret services. It originated from the abbreviation used for the Bolshevik's secret police – VChK, also known as Cheka (its full name *Vserossiiskaia chrezvychainaia kommissiia po borbe s kontrrevoliutsiiei i sabotazhem*/the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-revolution and Sabotage), created on 7 (20) December 1917. In 1923, the VChK was replaced by the OGPU/GPU (1923–1934) (*Obiedinennoie Gosudarstvennoie Politicheskoie Upravleniie*/the United State Political Administration, also known as the Joint State Political Directorate). The functions of the OGPU were transferred to the NKVD in 1934 (*Narodnyi Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del*/the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) which in 1946 was renamed to the MGB (*Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti*/the Ministry of State Security). In 1948, the military personnel of the foreign intelligence service were returned to the Soviet military, known today at the GRU (*Glavnoie Razvedovatelnoie Upravleniie*/the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation). The KGB emerged in 1954 and was reformed after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Today in the Russian Federation, the functions of the KGB are performed by the SVR (*Sluzhba Vneshei Razvedki*/the Foreign Intelligence Service), the FSB (*Federalnaia Sluzhba Bezopasnosti*/the Federal Security Service, before 1995 the Federal Counterintelligence Service), and the FSO (*Federalnaia Sluzhba Okhrany*/the Federal Protective Service).

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special operations—activities broadly known as Russian active measures or *aktivnye meropriiatiia*.[2]

Today our knowledge about the nature and mechanisms of active measures is deeper and more nuanced. Yet there is a blind spot that should be constantly observed, analyzed, and discussed—the supreme imperative and rationale of Russian active measures shaped by Russia's cultural traditions and history, and its civilizational choice to extend Russian influence in support of the Russian World.[3] An analysis of Russia's cultural traditions and its history might help us answer many questions about its geopolitical and foreign policy strategies and tactics, and the persistence of Russia's active measures against its neighboring states and the West that puzzle the world intelligence community, politicians, and ordinary people. Many want to understand the mechanisms of and connections among Kremlin officials, Russian disinformation, and assassinations of politicians and journalists in Russia and beyond. Some are curious about Russian cultural centers that mushroomed abroad, such as *Rossutrudnichestvo* (translated as Russian Cooperation), becoming extremely active since 2010 in recruiting Western youth as Russian intelligence assets.[4] More recent events and a crisis in Russian-Czech diplomatic relations invite questions about

2 Although the term emerged after the Second World War in the 1950s, the strategies, tactics, and tools of active measures have been designed and perfected since the early 1920s.

3 Kevin N. McCauley, *Russian Influence Campaigns Against the West: From the Cold War to Putin* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 374. The concept of the "Russian World" (Russkii mir) emerged in the 1990s but was vigorously promoted by Putin in 2014 to justify Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its annexation of Crimea. The idea of gathering all Russian-speaking people under one "roof," the Orthodox Christianity, and possibly being included in one political entity, the Russian Federation, motivated the current political regime in Russia to pursue this idea for Russia's nationalist interests and security. For a detailed discussion about the *Russkii mir*, see Marlene Laruelle, *The "Russian World": Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Global Interests, 2015); also available at https://globalinterests.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/FINAL-CGI_Russian-World_Marlene-Laruelle.pdf (accessed 19 June 2020).

4 For more on Rossutrudnichestvo and its ties to Russian intelligence, see a chapter in this volume written by Massimiliano Di Pasquale and Luigi Sergio Germani; Molly Redden, "FBI Probing Whether Russia Used Cultural Junkets to Recruit American Intelligence Assets," *Mother Jones*, 23 October 2013,

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why a Russian diplomat affiliated with Rossutrudnichestvo arrived in Prague in late April of 2020, allegedly carrying ricin. And many are intrigued by a planned assassination of a Georgian journalist who on television insulted President of Russia Vladimir Putin. Was this operation motivated by Putin's personal vendetta, or did Basambek Bokov, a Russian citizen arrested by the Georgian security services on 16 June 2020, prepare this assassination with much broader goals in mind?[5] Randomly selected, these questions touch on an extremely complex topic, Russian active measures, and their scope and geography that have been expanded under Putin's regime. What are their roots and the philosophy behind them?

The essays of this collection demonstrate that, like Soviet narratives, Russian narratives of world history, international relations, and global politics attempt to camouflage contemporary Russia's violence and subversive activities. These narratives help sustain Putin's regime in the Russian Federation and enhance Russia's role in managing the balance of global power. One of the central objectives of Soviet/Russian active measures is to control these narratives in political, economic, and cultural realms. These narratives have been created by the Russians to benefit themselves and to besmirch other states and ethnic groups. The task of the Russian intelligence services is to preempt or coopt anything that contradicts

https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/10/fbi-investigating-yury-zaytsev-russian-diplomat-spy/ (accessed 17 June 2020); "Spy vs. Spy—Rossotrudnichestvo, Russia's Agent of Influence Finder," *Minding Russia*, 25 October 2013, https://3dblogger.typepad.com/minding_russia/2013/10/spy-vs-spy-rossotrudnichestvo-russias-agent-of-influence-finder.html (accessed 17 June 2020); for a discussion about Russia's recruitment of American students, exchange programs, and co-opted American scholars, see Yuri Felshtinsky, "'My name is Fedyashin, Anton Fedyashin.' Who Is Anton Fedyashin and What Was He Teaching Maria Butina?," *Gordon*, 21 September 2018, https://english.gordonua.com/news/exclusiveenglish/my-name-is-fedyashin-anton-fedyashin-who-is-anton-fedyashin-and-what-was-he-teaching-maria-butina-investigation-by-yuri-felshtinsky-342703.html (accessed 17 June 2020).

5 "Kontrrazvedka Chekhii zakryla delo ob ugroze otravleniia prazhskikh politikov," *Radio Svoboda*, 13 June 2020, https://www.svoboda.org/a/30668588.html (accessed 17 June 2020); Georgii Kobaladze, "'Vypolnial voliu Putina.' Kto khotel ubit gruzinskogo zhurnalista?" *Radio Svoboda*, 16 June 2020, https://www.svoboda.org/a/30674132.html (accessed 17 June 2020).

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Russian narratives. They do so by using at least two primary strategies. First, they cast challenges to their narratives and alternative narratives as actions on the "extreme end of the Cold War spectrum." Second, any critique of Russian foreign policy or Russia's encroachments into other states' political or cultural spheres are identified as nationalistic manifestations of ultra-right neo-fascist governments or groups that have an ax to grind with Russia. A response from the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C. to the FBI investigation of Yurii Zaitsev, a Russian Foreign Intelligence officer and a professional spy acting as the Director of the Russian Cultural Center in Washington, D.C. Rossutrudnichestvo, provides an example of these strategies:

> All such "scaring information" very much resembles [the] Cold War era. A blunt tentative is made to distort and to blacken activities of the Russian Cultural Center in DC, which are aimed at developing mutual trust and cooperation between our peoples and countries. As a matter of fact, somebody intends to torpedo the guidelines of the Russian and U.S. Presidents, whose Joint Statement in Lough Erne emphasizes the importance of "expanding direct contracts between Americans and Russians that will serve to strengthen mutual understanding and trust and make it possible to raise U.S.-Russian relations to a qualitatively new level."[6]

Ironically, even some scholars who study active measures adopted this rhetoric without realizing the Russian influence on them, the influence of those whom they study. As one scholar has stated, "I am not a Cold War warrior. I am a scholar. The Russians do not deserve to be treated this way."[7]

This strategy seems to be extremely effective. Silencing the opposition this way, Russian propagandists exempt the Russian political leadership from criticism, and those critics who choose a path of persistence often find themselves in isolation, oblivion, or being physically eliminated. Through active measures, Russian "subverters" have been skillfully manipulating the argument of balance and

6 Redden, "FBI Probing." This text was updated at 6:00 p.m. EDT, on Wednesday, 23 October 2013. The Russian Embassy provided this statement in an email to Mother Jones.

7 Private conversation with an American scholar, 24 November 2019, the ASEEES Annual Convention, San Francisco, CA.

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moderation, identifying their critics as individuals of unbalanced and one-sided views. This tactic works each time, obscuring the truth and promoting the Russian version of events, be it in politics or the social sphere. Russian threats and accusations of being radical and aggressive, and of spreading "scaring information" (quoting a clerk at the Russian Embassy who, it should be acknowledged, is likely a well-trained intelligence officer pretending to be a diplomat) end up covering dangers of a much more serious magnitude, such as the suppression, deletion, misrepresentation, and trivialization of information inconvenient for the aggressor, as well as the promotion of one view that should dominate the discourse. The augmentation of Russian power and narrative occurs precisely through these measures, through the deletion of pluralism of opinions.

In his new book *Active Measures*, Thomas Rid has noted that "[r]ecognizing an active measure can be difficult."[8] Recognizing the goal behind it might be even more challenging. What complicates this recognition is chaos. Spreading anarchy and chaos and disrupting order have long been a strategy embedded in active measures.[9] Pulled to the right or to the left, confused, manipulated, and bluntly deceived, the general public, let alone disinformation professionals, lose their analytical perspective and defensive power. The cleverest of the cleverest get persuaded by nonsensical theories and explanations, embodying a living example of an erosion of cognitive abilities and common sense. It is not the power of disinformation itself that is magic and overarching but rather a combination of various tactics that makes people embrace a narrative which is structured and crystallized as a single message, gaining a strong foothold in their consciousness. Under the right circumstances, a single message, nicely packaged and to a degree intellectualized, is capable of shaping people's strong beliefs and convictions. Beyond being effective, it is also contagious, if persistently repeated and circulated.

8 Thomas Rid, *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2020), 9.

9 Rid, *Active Measures*, 11.

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Subscribing to a persuasive narrative helps people rid of confusions, insecurities, and vulnerabilities.

Most importantly, active measures erode democratic and social institutions, the pillars of democratic society, something that fascinated Alexis de Tocqueville upon his trip to the United States. The empty space is typically filled with other structures, institutions of coercion that sustain and perpetuate the machine of violence, direct or symbolic, akin to the contemporary Russian model known today as Putinism.[10] Disinformation professionals and scholars agree that the final result of active measures, especially when they are applied on a global scale (i.e., Russian anti-Western campaign), is impossible to measure or assess in some quantitative terms. Yet, some have claimed that Russian subversion of Western states in general, and the United States in particular, has been extremely successful, and its effects have been perceptible and quite visible since the early 1970s.

Broad Western audiences, especially in North America, learned about the process of ideological subversion from Yurii Bezmenov (1939–1993), also known in the West under his pen name Tomas D. Schuman, a Soviet journalist from the Soviet *Novosti* Press Agency and a KGB informant who in February 1970 defected to the U.S. Embassy in Athens and latter resettled in Canada. He was part of the organization responsible for foreign operations and intelligence activities known as the First Main Directorate (*Pervoie glavnoie upravleniie*) of the Committee for State Security under the Soviet Council of Ministers (PGU KGB). His position allowed him to master skills necessary for a deputy chief in the KGB's Research and Counterpropaganda group, serving in India, and to deeply understand the philosophy behind Soviet active measures.[11] On numerous occasions and in an extremely systematic way, Bezmenov

10 Rid, 11; on the rebirth of Cold War-style dictatorship and Putinism in Russia, see Walter Lacqueur, *Putinism: Russia and Its Future with the West*, 1st ed. (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2015).

11 Edward Mickolus, *The Counterintelligence Chronology: Spying By and Against the United States From the 1700s Through 2014* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2015), 74.

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explained the essence of active measures which he identified as operations of ideological subversion or psychological warfare. Deception, misinformation, disinformation, forgeries, and other tools (i.e., the use of alcohol and women that helped build trust between KGB agents and their targets), falling under the category of active measures, were broadly used by the KGB, particularly during the Cold War, to influence the course of events and behavior of foreign countries, first and foremost, of the United States, the main adversary of the Soviets. "Deception was my job," Bezmenov stated. Indeed, in his interviews, books, and lectures he explained that his task as a professional propagandist and "subverter" was to deceive the target and to change the target's perception of reality through the distortion of facts, lies, and half-truths.[12] In his 1984 interview to G. Edward Griffin, an American author, journalist, and filmmaker, Bezmenov argued that the Soviets had been extremely successful in demoralizing American society and persuading American citizens of the benefits of socialism. Moreover, Bezmenov warned the Americans that their awakening was urgent and crucial, otherwise they should say "farewell" to their freedoms that would be inevitably taken from them. From Bezmenov's perspective, the process of ideological subversion in the United States had been nearly completed by the late 1970s, yet most Americans did not have the slightest idea that their nation was under attack.[13]

Filled with quite graphic examples and stripped of any shades of political correctness, Bezmenov's interviews and statements require a fresh and sober look. He appealed to the West and his beloved America and its citizens, asking them to pay close attention to how the Russians overtly and openly had been ideologically subverting them, changing their views, beliefs, and convictions: "All American media has to do is to unplug their bananas from their

12 "'Deception Was My Job' or 'Soviet Subversion of the Free World Press' (complete interview of Yuri Bezmenov posted by Kevin Heine)," *YouTube*, 11 April 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFfrWKHB1Gc (accessed 18 June 2020); see also Richard H. Shultz and Roy Godson, *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy* (New York, NY: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1984), 2.

13 "'Deception Was My Job.'"

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ears, open up their eyes, and they can see it, with their own eyes."[14] This interview was aired in 1985, fourteen years after Bezmenov defected to the West, but today, his message and concerns sound particularly relevant and instructive. Since 2010, Russian measures have become more active, more aggressive, and quite dangerous.

Crucially, in the space of where Russian special operations and disinformation campaigns are implemented, there are no clearly defined borders, geographical, political, or cultural. A common fallacy is that Russian active measures target foreign states and their domestic use is irrelevant or non-existent. In fact, the implementation of active measures abroad necessitates a mirror action at home, and vice versa. As KGB documents suggest, a given KGB operation or active measures often had two dimensions, domestic and foreign. Their task was to enforce and reinforce a Soviet version of the story, a discourse, and rhetoric across geographical and political lines. During the Cold War, the stability and omnipresence of the chekist narrative and discourse guaranteed change in public opinion, and this change had to be universal. The prevalence of this discourse ultimately suppressed and marginalized other voices, truths, or discourses (domestically and overseas) that were inadmissible for the Soviet regime.[15] This approach is still in use in the Russian Federation.

Conceptually, as far as the strategy of active measures is concerned, little has changed in the Russian Federation since the Cold War. To maintain the consistency of Russian narratives that are promoted by the Russian political elites and affirm the allegedly democratic nature of the Russian regime and the exceptionalism of Russian culture, active measures and disinformation campaigns target the "fifth column" in Russia that undermines these myths, and the decadent West that produces narratives and ideologies hostile to

14 "KGB Defector Yuri Bezmenov's Warning to America," *YouTube*, 1 February 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bX3EZCVj2XA (accessed 17 June 2020).

15 Olga Bertelsen, "The Writers and the *Chekists'* Discourse about the Holodomor," in *Crossing Ethnic Boundaries: Cultural and Political Labyrinths of the Literati in Kharkiv, Ukraine in the 1960s–1970s* (Lexington Books, forthcoming).

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Russia. Silencing both of them eliminates the problem of discrepancy in preserving the Russian elites' narrative intact and unchallenged from within and abroad. The Russian politics of silencing alternative narratives that have intensified since 2010, combined with enduring disinformation campaigns, have extended the space of violence and confrontation, evident in Russia's "near abroad," Europe, the Middle East, and the United States.

Subversion is a form of violence and coercion, albeit "cultural," "symbolic," or "systemic," using Johan Galtung's or Slavoj Žižek's terms.[16] It is a self-perpetuated project that is informed by Russia's "'schematic narrative template' […] a social construct created to shape collective memory to fight external enemies, and this template was constantly reinforced and shaped by history itself in Russia."[17] It is rooted in Russia's "historic mission" and "civilizational choice," and, more broadly, in Russian culture.

In his insightful book entitled *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Harvard professor Samuel P. Huntington has noted that for many, the end of the Cold War signified the end of conflicts in global politics.[18] In the late 1990s, however, Huntington predicted that the world would inevitably change after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but it would not necessarily become peaceful. "Change was inevitable, progress was not," he wrote.[19] Indeed, the world encountered a new wave of ethnic and neo-imperial wars, frozen conflicts, and genocides. The estimations of wars and high and low intensity conflicts that occurred in the world within two years after 1991 are mindboggling: 48 ethnic wars and 164 conflicts erupted due to ethnic-territorial claims.[20] By 1996, "[w]ithin five years of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991,

16 Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990): 291–305; Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167–91; Slavoj Žižek's, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London, U.K.: Picador, 2008).

17 Olga Bertelsen, "A Trial *in Absentia*: Purifying National Historical Narratives in Russia," *Kyiv Mohyla Humanities Journal*, no. 3 (2016): 73.

18 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London, U.K.: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 31.

19 Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 31.

20 Huntington, 35.

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ethnic conflicts spilled over two hundred hot spots throughout its vast territory, most of them in the Russian Federation."[21] Russia played a pivotal role in inflaming and steering them. The most notorious examples of armed and low intensity conflicts accompanied by chaos and mass deaths are Russia's two wars in Chechnya and its genocide of the Chechens.[22]

Although Huntington's interpetation about Russian-Ukrainian relations and histories has certain limitations, his civilizational approach to conflicts and wars that were escalated after 1991 seems to be prophetic in light of Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's

21 E. I. Stepanov, ed., *Konflikty v sovremennoi Rossii: Problemy analiza i regulirovaniia* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 1999), 228. I am grateful to Victoria Malko for sharing this source with me.

22 On Russian genocide in Chechnya and responses to it in Russia and the West, see Anna Politkovskaya, *A Dirty War: A Russian Reporter in Chechnya*, trans. John Crowfoot (London: Harvill, 2001); Matthew Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002); Victoria A. Malko, *The Chechen Wars: Responses in Russia and the United States* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2015); Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's War: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 187–204; James Hughes, "The Chechnya Conflict: Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?," *Demokratizatsiya* 15, no. 3 (2007): 293–311; see also "Latvia: Latvian Parliament Member Accuses Russia of Genocide in Chechnya," *IPR Strategic Business Information Database/Business Insights: Essentials*, 9 February 2000, https://bi-gale-com.ezproxy.libproxy.db.erau.edu/essentials/article/GALE%7CA59278837?u=embry&sid=summon (accessed 14 June 2020); and "Czech Republic: Czech President Accuses Russia of Genocide in Chechnya," *IPR Strategic Business Information Database/Business Insights: Essentials*, 29 February 2000, https://bi-gale-com.ezproxy.libproxy.db.erau.edu/essentials/article/GALE%7CA59648000?u=embry&sid=summon (accessed 14 June 2020). In February 1999, Latvian parliamentary deputy Juris Vidins claimed that there were documents in his possession detailing Russia's genocidal policies against Chechnya. These documents were signed by Russian Chief of Army General Staff Colonel-General Anatolii Kvashnin, ordering the "filtration of Chechens between the ages of 10 and 14" who were to be sent to Omsk for military training. The second document dated 15 December 1999 was a Russian Security Council report to then State Duma Speaker Gennadii Seleznev. This document ordered the destruction of mountain villages in Bamut, Itum-Kale, and Zandak Districts with the subsequent resettlement of inhabitants to northern regions of Chechnya or elsewhere in Russia. The Czech President Václav Havel shared Vidins' claim, arguing that Russia's operations in Chechnya should be identified as the "killing of a nation." Gavel asserted that the Russian war in Chechnya had nothing to do with countermeasures against terrorism.

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Crimea and conventional war in Ukraine's Donbas. NATO's Supreme Allied Commander identified the Russian campaign in Crimea as "the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg" in history.[23] In Huntington's terms, Russia's conventional and hybrid war against Ukraine is a cultural war and a war of identities. The disintegration of the Cold War world inspired peoples and nations to seek identity and reinvent ethnicity, a process in which the discourse about enemies and hostilities toward them became an inseparable part of emerging ideologies, narratives, and practices. Deep and historically bound differences among civilizational identities and cultures shaped the severity of cultural conflicts, changing the balance of power among civilizations and exacerbating enmities among them across the cultural fault lines.[24]

The global politics of the post-Cold War world illuminated a general trend of new communication patterns: civilizations with similar cultures were coming together, and those with different cultures were coming apart. Alliances were built across similar cultural lines, and conflicts emerged because of cultural and ideological differences that seemed to be amplified with the passage of time.[25] In this context, the on-going conflict between Russia and Ukraine has highlighted the differences between these two civilizations that appear to be substantial and, thus, their clash seems to be logical and inevitable. As a militarily competitor that is stronger than Ukraine, Russia attempts to redraw political boundaries that should coincide with its cultural boundaries, real or imagined. This can only be accomplished from a position of force, as regionalism has never been an accurate term that would ultimately assume or condition the cooperation between Russia and Ukraine. "Regions are geographical not political or cultural entities,"[26] and volatile and turbulent relations between these two states have been shaped by shared geography but different histories, having produced a

23 Quoted in Peter Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War against Reality* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2019), 90.
24 Huntington, 20.
25 Ibid., 125.
26 Ibid., 130.

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phenomenon of two different cultures and civilizations that contest shared geography and reject volitional cooperation.

Putin's 2014 attack against Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and Russian intense non-conventional warfare largely dissolved multiple identities in Ukraine and crystallized the most important and meaningful identity among the Ukrainians, associated with concepts such as solidarity and unity necessary for the defense of Ukraine against Russian aggression. Putinism exacerbated the identity differences between these two states, pulling them further apart and creating the foundation for a multi-generational enduring conflict and the human casualties it causes.

Huntington's civilizational approach helps us better understand the vector and the severity of Russian active measures in Ukraine and beyond. Most importantly, checking the blind spot and learning more about the cultural and often irreconcilable differences among civilizations might enhance our ability to recognize a narrative that motivates "subverters" to launch a hybrid or disinformation war against those who advance competing narratives and discourses. In other words, for diagnostic purposes, it is necessary to learn in depth the cultural histories of entities involved in a conflict and to go beyond an analysis of the intelligence aspect of their national and transnational histories, international relations, and foreign policies.

This volume is a step in this direction. This collection of essays written by scholars and specialists in intelligence studies and Soviet/Russian history, culture, and politics illuminates the multifaceted nature and the broad geographic mosaic of Russian active measures. The focal point is Ukraine. The violent lawlessness of Russia's 2014 covert operation in Crimea, "accompanied by a blizzard of Russian denials and false flags," opened a "new era of global information warfare, in which countries and non-state actors use social media and disinformation to create their own narratives and undermine anyone who opposes them."[27] Ukraine's case is

27 Richard Stengel, *Information Wars: How We Lost the Global Battle against Disinformation & What We Can Do About It* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2019), cover page.

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most instructive and classic for those who would like to study Soviet/Russian active measures and political warfare in its terrain and beyond.[28] The range of Soviet/Russian special operations and subversive practices in Ukraine has been all-encompassing since the Cold War era. Historical studies and analyses of the most current events in Ukraine, including its territories occupied by Russia-backed separatists, such as the Donbas, will offer readers a glimpse into Russian propaganda and disinformation campaigns that prepare the space for potential covert operations and a military takeover. They reveal a wide array of tactics and practices used by Russian intelligence, from disinformation to memory wars, and the use of paramilitary forces (the "little green men" in Crimea who were Russian Spetsnaz) and cyber technology. Many scholars have emphasized that "re-historicizing interpretations of active measures through the lens of Russian/Soviet history is a necessary prerequisite to contemporary analysis of similar Russian activities,"[29] and this volume is an attempt to observe Russian psychological warfare through historical and philosophical lenses.

The studies included in this collection demonstrate with absolute clarity that Russia's historical and philosophical traditions, and its new nationalist ideology underpin and inform a variety of influence campaigns in contemporary Ukraine, Italy, Sweden, France, and Estonia, accentuating the evolution of Russian active measures and revealing that today they target not only people's minds but

28 The term "political warfare" was outlined in George Kennan's 1948 Policy Planning memo. It reads: "Political warfare is the logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in time of peace. In broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures, and 'white' propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of 'friendly' foreign elements, and 'black' psychological warfare." See "George F. Kennan on Organizing Political Warfare," History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, *Wilson Center*, 30 April 1948, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114320.pdf?v=941dc9ee5c6e51333ea9ebbbc9104e8c (accessed 18 June 2020); also quoted in Stengel, *Information Wars*, 139.

29 See, for instance, David V. Gioe, Richard Lovering, and Tyler Pachesny, "The Soviet Legacy of Russian Active Measures: New Vodka from Old Stills?," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 33, no. 3 (2020): 1–26.

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also technologies and the state's governmental infrastructure.[30] The proactive nature of these campaigns and Putin's expansionism (a desire to extend Russia's influence and its borders) are analyzed by exploring the extent of Russia's cultural connections overseas and its infiltration of Western academia and cultural establishments. Through thorough research, the contributors of this collection have shown that, building a cyber and conventional army and coopting Russian and foreign journalists, scholars, and politicians, Putin ultimately has built a reputation of a powerful and invincible leader of a new Russian state, a supersized KGB/FSB/SVR/GRU entity that solves foreign policy and diplomacy issues through force, bullying, and intimidation. The most frequently used rhetoric emanating from the Kremlin offices, such as the Presidential Administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, include an emphasis on Russian "mirror actions" in response to the "aggressive Western alliances' behavior." A Russian narrative with a traditional binary model encompassing "us" vs "them" which is instrumental in Russian disinformation campaigns (Russia as a victim that resists Ukrainian nationalists and neo-fascists, as well as Western pressure) is effectively deconstructed and exposed by several authors in this collection.

Ironically, Russian history that helps us better understand the nature and the roots of active measures is being actively rewritten in the Russian Federation under Putin and by Putin himself.[31] On 18 June 2020, *The National Interest* published an essay written by Putin in which he reassesses the meaning of the 1938 Munich conference, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and the Yalta Conference. The studies included in this collection highlight the toxic nature of Russian memory politics that is capable of obscuring narratives other than Russian and of coopting Russian and Western historians. In this context, it became clear that one has to learn Russian history

30 Rid, *Active Measures*, 13.

31 Vladimir Putin, "The Real Lessons of the 75th Anniversary of World War II," *The National Interest*, 18 June 2020, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/vladimir-putin-real-lessons-75th-anniversary-world-war-ii-162982 (accessed 19 June 2020).

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through more objective sources and studies, conceived and published outside the heavily censored and ideologically guarded space of the Russian Federation, not under the patronage of its current political leadership. Importantly, as several studies in this collection argue, Russian history should be studied through national historical narratives produced in Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Georgia, and other states of post-Soviet space. They help observe a shared goal of Russian active measures and memory wars that create a space for uncertainty and doubt about the truth, discouraging and preventing individuals and states from pursuing it. This space is unattended, unregulated, and ungoverned. As Shane Harris has noted, ungoverned spaces eventually fall apart,[32] or are filled by another force that typically establishes its own regulations and rules that help control its narrative. Whoever controls information and whoever controls the narrative has power, and as Soviet/Russian history has demonstrated, power is a paramount consideration and concern in the Russian civilization.

Today, the world cannot complain that there is a lack of information. On the contrary, an ordinary consumer is crushed by information from all sides. Richard Stengel reminded us that the U.S. Library of Congress alone has 39 million books.[33] Yet, Russian information warfare seems to have limited people's choices of sources, persuading many that Russia has a monopoly on truth. Peter Pomerantsev has aptly noted that "[m]ore information was supposed to mean a more informed debate, but we seem less capable of deliberation than ever. More information was supposed to mean mutual understanding across borders, but it has also made possible new and more subtle forms of conflict and subversion."[34] Mutual understanding across borders, the future without conflict, and cooperation among civilizations might be possible only if international order and peace are maintained. The problem with the latter, as well as international law and order that has been consistently

32 Shane Harris, *@ Wars: The Rise of the Military-Internet Complex* (New York: An Eamon Dolan Book, 2014), 226.
33 Stengel, *Information Wars*, 289.
34 Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda*, xi.

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violated by the Russian Federation since 2014, seems to rest in cultural differences between world civilizations and their leaders' cultural understandings of order. Huntington was convinced that in the future "the world will be ordered on the basis of civilization or not at all."[35] Those civilizations that are culturally close will come together, and those who are drastically different will come apart.

We are living in a time when this process has been accelerated, and Russia is a key player in that process. The Russian secret biochemical weapons program and laboratories function at full capacity, Novichok is being produced and used, the territories of foreign states are annexed, passenger liners are shot down by Russian BUKs, the "Kremlin's assassination program"[36] is active and has new young trainees (employees of the GRU), American students and scholars are coopted and recruited through FSB front organizations, and history is being rewritten because of Putin, for Putin, and by Putin himself. Bezmenov, who in 1984 expressed serious concerns about Russian subversive activities that, from his point of view, had been quite successful in North America, did not have an opportunity to observe the extent of Russian active measures after 2014, having died under mysterious circumstances in Canada in 1993 at the age of 54. A quarter of a century later, the veteran of Russian intelligence Oleg Kalugin was similarly concerned, stating that "current developments in Russia are highly disturbing," referencing Zbigniew Brzezinski who foresaw the emergence of a new form of fascist nationalism in Russia.[37] This volume is designed to raise public awareness of these trends and Russian active measures that beyond ideological motivations also have financial ones. As Kalugin has suggested, "the KGB was an organization. There are no organizations in Russia now, just organized crime."[38] The authors in this volume consider a discussion about Russian overt and covert operations of ideological subversion timely and necessary,

35 Huntington, 156.

36 Heidi Blake, *From Russia with Blood: The Kremlin's Ruthless Assassination Program and Vladimir Putin's Secret War on the West* (New York: Mulholland Books, 2019).

37 Oleg Kalugin, *Spymaster: My Thirty-two Years in Intelligence and Espionage Against the West* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 443.

38 Kalugin, *Spymaster*, 442.

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as thorough analyses of the current developments in Russia and agnotological inquiries produce concerns, and thus solutions.[39]

While this book answers many questions about Russian active measures, it also provokes new questions. Can we all learn the skills of diagnostics or does only naturally acquired cultural knowledge help recognize subversion imposed on us? Can we map a false narrative? Can we distinguish between reality and falsehoods? Will Russia discontinue active measures, and when and where will Putin stop? Theodor Adorno once compared Nazi Germany, engaged in mass killings, with a serial killer who could not stop unless he was stopped.[40] By analogy, the Russian economist, senior fellow at the CATO Institute, and former economic policy adviser to Putin Andrei Illarionov has emphasized the danger of Putin and the regime he established in Russia. Over the last decade, one can observe that the Russian Government led by Putin has become authoritarian at home with clear features of fascist ideology, as some scholars have argued, and more aggressive and destabilizing in its foreign policy.[41] Illarionov has offered several suggestions about how the international community can stop Putin and his hybrid war against Russia's neighboring states and the West.[42] The initial stage includes the process of learning and understanding Russian culture and civilization.

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39 Agnotology refers to the "study of the deliberate manufacture of ignorance or doubt, including the spread of selective, inaccurate or misleading scientific data." See John Launer, "The Production of Ignorance," *Postgraduate Medical Journal* 96, no. 1133 (2020): 179–80; also available at https://pmj.bmj.com/content/postgradmedj/96/1133/179.full.pdf (accessed 19 June 2020).

40 Theodor W. Adorno, "Messages in a Bottle," in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. *Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2012)*, 35.

41 Alexander J. Motyl, "Putin's Russia as a Fascist Political System," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 49, no. 1 (2016): 25–36.

42 U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *From Competition to Collaboration: Strengthening the U.S.-Russian Relationship: Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs*, 111th Cong, 1st Sess., 25 February 2009 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009); also available at https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111hhrg47667/html/CHRG-111hhrg47667.htm (accessed 20 June 2020); see also *Ashish Kumar Sen*, "Will Sanctions on Russia, Weapons for Ukrainians, Keep Putin at Bay?," *Atlantic Council*, 7 April 2015, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/will-sanctions-on-russia-weapons-for-ukrainians-keep-putin-at-bay/ (accessed 20 June 2020).

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By the time you finish reading this book, you will be able to answer some of the aforementioned questions. However, you will certainly have questions of your own. Indeed, much more should be done. Research should be continued, the former KGB archives should be mined, and studies have to be published to identify and analyze the blind spot of Russian active measures. Thus far, there are no signs of Putinism receding into the past, and hence the history of Russian active measures will be expanded. Their geography will be broadened, their tools will be perfected, and their technological support will be advanced. The world might radically change in the nearest future because of cataclysmic events, similar to COVID-19. What likely will stay permanent is Russian narratives used by "subverters." And Russia's battle to promote them will continue.

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The Many Faces of the New Information Warfare

Marcel H. Van Herpen

In the last ten to fifteen years the world has been confronted with a new phenomenon—information warfare. It is called a "war" and sometimes, as was the case in 2008 when Russia invaded Georgia, part of a real kinetic war. However, in most cases this war is being fought in areas of the world which are at peace. For this reason, a new term has been coined—a "hybrid war," a state between war and peace that in many respects resembles the Cold War. At times, a conflict takes on the character of a kinetic war, fought with soldiers and weapons. Yet, more often than not, the kinetic aspect of military action, involving lethal force, is missing from the picture. One of the features of a hybrid war is secretiveness: the aggressors try to conceal their involvement. They do not acknowledge that they are waging a war. For this reason, for the aggressors, *plausible deniability* is important. Plausible deniability means that the attacking party is able to deny its knowledge of or responsibility for hostile actions conducted by its agencies or by third parties under its control, such as so-called "separatists" in Ukraine's occupied Donbas region, manipulated and supported by the Russian Federation. Although there is ample evidence to suggest that that these separatists are controlled, instructed, armed, and manipulated by the Russian Federation, the Kremlin stubbornly denies its involvement in the region, arguing that this is not a war of aggression, but a civil war, waged by "separatists" who refused to accept a new, illegal, and "fascist" government in Kyiv, installed after the Maidan revolution.

"Hybrid war" and "plausible deniability" are the two characteristics of new information warfare, a war that is hidden and non-declared, in which the aggressor denies responsibility for the casualties and damage this war causes. Often, the damage is substantial. For instance, cyberattacks might bring the economies of entire

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countries to a standstill, paralyzing electricity grids and the air traffic, and putting people's lives in jeopardy in dysfunctional hospitals. Manipulating public opinion and meddling in the electoral process might have even more damaging and enduring consequences. These actions might undermine democratic governments and challenge the values on which these democracies are built.

A Russian Vision: The First and Second Global Information Wars

For aforementioned reasons, the phenomenon of a hybrid war deserves close attention. It seems prudent to begin its analysis with an explanation offered by Igor Panarin, a Russian scholar, an expert in Russian information warfare, and a former KGB agent who has recently become Dean of the Diplomatic Academy of the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation. His contribution to the knowledge of young diplomats about information warfare is significant. In 2010, Panarin published a book on the topic entitled *The First Global Information War: The Collapse of the USSR*.[1] A Western reader might be surprised with its content because, unlike Western analysts who believe that a global information war has begun in the first decade of the twenty-first century, Panarin claimed that the war began much earlier, during the pre-Internet and social media era. He even offered the exact year (1943) and the place (the city of Quebec, Canada) where the "first global information war" began.

In August 1943, there was a summit in Quebec, where Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and the Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King met. According to Panarin, Churchill instigated the information war against the Soviet Union, and its objectives included "weakening the competitor, [and] its economic and geopolitical expansion," which would ultimately lead to the "destruction (disintegration) of [our] main ideological and geopolitical opponent—the USSR."[2] The beginning of this information war was unsuccessful because of the "heroic resistance" of Joseph Stalin, whom

1 Igor Panarin, *Pervaia mirovaia informatsionnaia voina: Razval SSSR* (Moscow: Piter, 2010).

2 Panarin, *Pervaia mirovaia informatsionnaia voina*, 12–13.

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Panarin profoundly praised in his text. However, the situation changed after Stalin's death in 1953, when the CIA and the British MI6 launched the "Operation Anti-Stalin." Nikita Khrushchev was the ideal target for this operation. He was the "anti-Stalin" who provided the Anglo-Americans with an "opportunity to break up the USSR."[3] But they had to wait a bit longer to celebrate the final victory. The advent of Mikhail Gorbachev, whose election was "a victory for those who promoted him," facilitated their task.[4] The first global information war ended with the demise of the Soviet Union which, according to Panarin, was a Western plot, organized by Churchill as early as 1943.

Yet, this was only part of the story. In his second book entitled *Information War, PR, and World Politics* published in 2014, Panarin described the second global information war. He argued that, initiated again by the West, the second information war began in the 1990s, but this time this war would be won by Russia. According to Panarin, Russia's victory would be conditioned by several factors, including the Russian political elite's passion and its preparedness for the "global uncompromising informational-psychological confrontation with the global elites [the US and the UK]."[5]

Interestingly, Panarin's texts open a window into how the Russians view information warfare and how they perceive the West's tactics and strategies vis-à-vis Russia. First, we learn that the representatives of the highest echelons of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs support conspiracy theories and build on them. Second, they believe that Khrushchev and Gorbachev were "foreign agents" who were placed in their posts by foreign powers. Third, they suggest that the information war that began in 1943 has never ceased, and has been extended by the West even after the demise of the Soviet Union. Finally, there is a certain optimism among them about Russia's eventual victory, and this victory is imminent. Moreover, Panarin predicted that this war would be won in 2020, which

3 Panarin, *Pervaia mirovaia informatsionnaia voina*, 144.
4 Panarin, *Pervaia mirovaia informatsionnaia voina*, 9.
5 Igor Panarin, *Informatsionnaia voina, PR, i mirovaya politika* (Moscow: Goriachaia Liniia, 2014), 133.

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means that we might be witnessing Russia's victory this year, now, any moment, in fact.

Let us take a pause here and think what happened between 2010 and 2014, the time when Panarin published his books, and a situation, in which we live today. In the United States Donald Trump was elected President; the Brexit referendum occurred in Britain; and separatist movements unraveled in Catalonia. Russia seems to play an active role in these events.

Soviet Propaganda and Disinformation

Let us, however, make a foray into history. Propaganda is not something new. The Soviet Union advanced itself in producing propaganda. In the early 1920s, the Bolsheviks established a special unit within the Central Committee of the Communist Party, called the Agitation and Propaganda Department, well known in its abbreviated form—Agitprop. The Agitprop had sub-departments responsible for the press, cinema, theater, radio, the arts, literature, science, and schools. It was so successful that it served as a model for Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda.

The word "disinformation" (*dezinformatsiia*) is also of Russian origin. For the first time, the word appeared in 1963, when the KGB created a special section, tasked with spreading disinformation.[6] The rich experience of the Soviet secret police, including its tactics and strategies, eased the tasks of Vladimir Putin who employed and emulated the Soviet models. However, Putin has not simply copied the existing intelligence templates but rather improved them, being a true reformer and even an innovator. He allocates extremely generous budgets to the Kremlin's propaganda efforts, profoundly modernizing the Russian propaganda machine. He uses psychological know-how, systematically adjusting the ways in which he conducts information warfare. He intelligently uses the openness of the Western media, making it vulnerable to the Russian

6 Cf. Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD, and London, U.K.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 2–4.

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propaganda offensive. Importantly, he has transformed propaganda into an effective war machine, destabilizing Western countries and actively interfering in elections. These tactics allow Putin to effectively influence political, social, economic, and cultural processes, undermining developed world democracies.

How Does the Russian Propaganda Machine Work?

The main instrument used in the Kremlin's propaganda offensive is the Russian cable TV *RT* (originally named *Russia Today*). Launched in May 2005, it was designed to become a global competitor of CNN, BBC World, Deutsche Welle, and Al Jazeera. The channel went live on 10 December 2005. The Kremlin was prepared to invest substantial sums in this project. Starting with $70 million in 2005, the budget was increased to $80 million in 2007 and to $120 million in 2008. In 2011, the budget was tripled to $380 million. RT grew into an organization with a staff of two thousand employees worldwide, reporting from twenty bureaus. It included a bureau in Washington with approximately one hundred personnel. The new Russian cable TV was very successful. In 2013, two million Britons watched RT regularly. It did not confine itself to broadcasting in English, but also offered programs in Arabic and Spanish. After the annexation of the Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of eastern Ukraine, the Kremlin decided to focus on the two leading countries of the EU, France and Germany, launching a French-language and German-language channel. Confronted with Western sanctions, RT's budget, which was still approximately $330 million in 2015, was reduced by ten percent for the year 2016, when it received approximately $300 million.[7] According to the *Russian American Magazine*,

> … today RT is a global, round-the-clock news network that includes seven TV channels broadcasting news, current affairs and documentary content, digital platforms in six languages and a video news agency RUPTLY. Round-the-clock news channels in English, Arabic and Spanish and documentary channel

7 "RT's 2016 Budget Announced, Down From 2015, MSM Too Stumped to Spin?" *RT*, 10 October 2015, https://www.rt.com/op-ed/318181-rt-budget-down-msm/ (accessed 20 May 2020).

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> RTDoc in English and Russian broadcast from Moscow, while RT America airs from a Washington, DC studio and RT UK—from London. Today, RT is available in more than 100 countries spanning 5 continents.[8]

What is the content of RT's programs? In the first years RT aimed at improving Russia's image abroad. The programs featured Russia's unique culture, its ethnic diversity, and its decisive role in the Second World War. Their viewers would seek in vain for reliable information on more critical subjects, such as election fraud, frequent murders of journalists and politicians, and government officials' corruption. In the summer of 2008, during Russia's invasion of Georgia, RT became a source of active disinformation, depicting the Georgians as the ones who committed genocide against Abkhazians and residents of South Ossetia. This narrative was embraced by other Russian news outlets and scholars at prestigious Russian universities (i.e., MGIMO), and it persists today among Russian journalists and the Russian political elite.[9] From the moment RT's focus began to change. Defensive "soft power" tools were replaced with an offensive tool of disinformation that helped RT accentuate the negative sides of the West in general, and the United States in particular. Routinely, an emphasis was made on the growing social inequality, race problems, homeless people's suffering, mass unemployment, human rights violations, and the consequences of the banking crisis. Anchors of RT programs, such as Peter Lavelle, did not hide their explicit anti-American views.[10]

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8 "RT—Washington Bureau," *Russian American Magazine*, 20 May 2020, https://russianamericanmagazine.com/directory/listing/rt-washington-bureau (accessed 20 May 2020).

9 See Sergei Bagapsh's commentary of Pavel Sheremet's text "Ataka otchaianiia," *Ogoniok*, no. 33, 17 August 2008, p. 10; also available at https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2301243 (accessed 20 May 2020); Elena Ponomariova, "Abkhaziia i Iuzhnaia Osetiia: Budushchee otnoshenii s Gruziei," *MGIMO Universitet*, 5 December 2009, https://mgimo.ru/about/news/experts/129314/ (accessed 20 May 2020); The Head of the Investigative Committee A. I. Bastrykin's interview to the journal "Oriientir," *Sledstvennyi Komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 31 August 2009, https://sledcom.ru/press/interview/item/507343/?print=1 (accessed 20 May 2020); "V Iuzhnoi Osetii prokhodiat pamiatnyie meropriiatiia," *RT*, 8 August 2013, https://russian.rt.com/article/13693 (accessed 20 May 2020).

10 Peter Lavelle is an American journalist who since 1997 is based in Moscow. He was hired by RT in 2005, and a participant of the Valdai Discussion Club, where

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RT began to invite "experts," many of whom represented marginal or extreme right groups. One of these groups was the "truthers," people who believed that the 9/11 attacks were not the work of al-Qaeda, but of the U.S. government.[11] Another group was the "birthers" who, without offering any evidence, doubted Barack Obama was born in the United States, and questioned his eligibility to serve as American president. Manuel Ochsenreiter, an "expert" from Germany and the editor of the neo-Nazi magazine *Zuerst!* has been regularly invited as a speaker by RT's English-language channel. The *Economist* did not hesitate to qualify RT's programs as "weirdly constructed propaganda" characterized by "a penchant for wild conspiracy theories."[12] Despite this sort of criticism, and Western nations' constraints and regulations which prescribe the rules of impartiality, RT acquired free access to Western audiences and became an effective propaganda tool of the Kremlin. RT's success inspired the Kremlin to also revamp *The Voice of Russia,* an international radio station. On 9 December 2013, Putin issued a presidential decree, merging *The Voice of Russia* with the news agency RIA Novosti and forming a new international news agency *Rossiia Segodnia* (Russia Today). The radio station was transformed into *Radio Sputnik*, becoming part of a broader platform, *Sputnik News,* which also had an online presence. The new international radio station began to broadcast on 10 November 2014.

"Russia Beyond the Headlines": Targeting Western Elites

The objectives of RT and Sputnik included targeting broad international audiences, yet the Kremlin never gave up the idea to also

the Russian political elite meet with domestic and foreign journalists and scholars. For more details about the Valdai Discussion Club, see "Valdai Club Foundation," *Valdai Discussion Club*, 2020, https://valdaiclub.com/about/valdai/ (accessed 20 May 2020).

11 Daphne Skillen, *Freedom of Speech in Russia: Politics and Media from Gorbachev to Putin* (London, U.K.: Routledge, 2016), 296.

12 "Airways Wobbly—Russia Today Goes Mad," *The Economist*, 6 July 2010; see also Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine*, 73.

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reach out to the Western elites. This was the reason to launch another project in 2007—*Russia Beyond the Headlines* (RBTH). The initiator of this project was the *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* (The Russian Newspaper), the official Kremlin paper in which state laws and decrees are published and official views are reflected. This project was extremely ambitious, and once a month a Russian eight-page supplement was added to a number of highly influential Western papers, including *The Washington Post* (United States),[13] *The New York Times* (United States), *The Daily Telegraph* (United Kingdom), *Le Figaro* (France), *Repubblica* (Italy), *El País* (Spain), *De Standaard* (Belgium), and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany). The titles of this supplement were: *Russia Now* in the United States and the U.K.; *La Russie d'Aujourd'hui* in France; *Russland Heute* in Germany; *Russia Oggi* in Italy; and *Rusia Hoy* in Spain. Each of these printed supplements had their own website that could be reached via links offered by these newspapers at their official websites. The Russians succeeded in making the supplement look like a Western newspaper, with an attractive layout and interesting texts that covered sport events, cultural issues, cuisine, art, and *faits divers.*

Interestingly, one could not find any straightforward Kremlin propaganda in it. In fact, some publications openly criticized Kremlin leaders. One of them was an interview with the Russian writer Liudmila Ulitskaia who discussed her correspondence with the jailed oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, praising him as "brilliant." The 2011–2012 mass protests in Russia were characterized as the events that had made political life in Russia "more lively." These texts, critical of the political regime in Russia, had no chance to be published in these supplements' mother paper—*Rossiiskaia Gazeta* (Russian Newspaper). So what was the strategy behind these practices?

The Russians understood very well that merely copying the content and layout of *Izvestiia* (News) or *Moskovskii Komsomolets* (Moscow Komsomol Member) into the supplement would hardly

13 Michael K. Lavers, "Washington Post Publishes Pro-Russian Supplement," *Washington Blade,* 16 October 2013, https://www.washingtonblade.com/2013/10/16/washington-post-publishes-pro-russia-supplement/ (accessed 20 May 2020).

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win the hearts and minds of Western readers. Therefore, Russian propagandists designed two stratagems that were used to mollify and manipulate Western readers. The first included diminishing their cognitive dissonance by adapting the content and the style of publications to fit their liberal critical Western mind. The second stratagem was the application of the *two-step flow of communication model*, offered by the Austrian-American sociologist and the founder of Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research Paul Lazarsfeld. He has argued that information disseminated by the mass media does not find its way *directly* to broader audiences, but is rather *indirectly* channeled to them through opinion leaders.[14] For this reason, it was especially the Western quality newspapers that were targeted by the Kremlin, and not the tabloids. The RBTH project was a living example of active disinformation. Its main objective was to ascribe a "liberal" image to the Kremlin, a KGB old strategy. Attributing liberal values to the KGB chief Yurii Andropov can serve as an example of this strategy. In 1982, when he became the Soviet leader and the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, the KGB presented him as a modern, Western-style, jazz-loving man and a whisky drinker. In reality, Andropov had kidney problems and could not drink alcohol.

The RBTH project has gone through several changes in recent years. On 9 January 2016, the RBTH became part of TV Novosti, and in 2017 the printed versions were dropped, although printed supplements in the *Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* continued into 2018. The decision to drop the print media was probably made because the project was costly and was increasingly criticized in Western media. This might have been one of the reasons why in September 2017 the project name, RBTH, dropped the last two words, becoming *Russia Beyond*.[15]

14 For an explanation of this hypothesis, see Elihu Katz, "The Two-Step Flow of Communication: An Up-To-Date Report on an Hypothesis," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1957): 61–78.

15 See *Russia Beyond*'s official site, 2020, https://www.rbth.com/ (accessed 20 May 2020).

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Buying Western Papers: The Case of *France-Soir*

In 2009 in France, where a popular paper *France-Soir* was on the verge of bankruptcy, it was bought by the Russian oligarch Sergei Pugachev and his son Aleksandr. They planned to transform this paper into a popular mass-selling tabloid, similar to the German *Bild* or the English *Sun.* The young Pugachev who was in charge openly expressed his extreme-right sympathies. "I like the ideas of Le Pen," he said.[16] His bias in favor of the extreme right became even clearer in March 2011, when during the campaign for the regional elections in March 2011 the paper published the results of an opinion poll, commissioned by the paper, about the Front National, an unconditional supporter of the Putin regime.[17] The results of this poll were accompanied by an editorial that praised the Front National for having become a party "just like the others."

In order to have a significant influence on their subscribers, papers need mass readership. In the United Kingdom, for instance, *The Sun* has a readership of approximately two million, and in Germany *Bild* reached approximately one million. The Pugachevs aimed high. They even hired a man who had led an (abandoned) Springer project to launch a French version of *Bild*. However, the paper never sold more than 75,000 copies, and in 2012 the paper was liquidated. As a result, an attempt to win support of a mass tabloid in France for the Front National, a party that supported Putin's regime unconditionally, failed.

Interestingly, in the United Kingdom the former KGB agent Aleksandr Lebedev and his son Yevgenii launched a similar project. They bought *The London Evening Standard* and *The Independent.* Although Lebedev publicly supported the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, he is far from being a Kremlin tool or a fan of the extreme right. Together with the former President of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev, Lebedev owns the Russian opposition paper *Novaia Gazeta* (New Newspaper). One of its prominent journalists,

16 Frédérique Roussel, "Russie-Soir," *Libération,* 17 February 2011.

17 The National Front, known after June 2018 as National Rally (French: *Rassemblement national*), is a right-wing populist and nationalist political party in France.

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Anna Politkovskaia, who covered Russia's campaigns in Chechnya and who was a vocal critic of Putin and the FSB, was assassinated on 6 October 2006 in the center of Moscow.[18] Until today, the editorial line of *The Independent* has remained true to its name.

Kremlin Trolls

Anonymous state-sponsored Internet political commentators, known as Kremlin trolls, is another innovation in Russia's information war against the West. The origin of this phenomenon is associated with symbiotic cooperation that developed among the Russian government, the Russian secret services, and the Kremlin-sponsored youth movement, known as *Nashi* (Ours). In 2009, the Kremlin pundit and the director of the Foundation for Effective Politics Gleb Pavlovskii set up a project entitled the "Kremlin School of Bloggers."[19] Pavlovskii's Foundation for Effective Politics is a think tank that has been instrumental in shaping the Russian ideology and Russian identity over the last decade.

Since 2009, the "Kremlin School of Bloggers" has been advocating, defending, and selling the Kremlin's policies to the Internet community by writing blogs, attacking opposition websites, and posting comments on Facebook and Twitter. In times of increased tension with the West these activities reached new heights. In May 2014, for instance, during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the British paper *The Guardian* received a massive number of pro-Russian comments, often written in poor English. Due to the activities of these trolls, the *Moscow Times* had to close its comments page. In July 2014, a Dutch web magazine, *De Correspondent,* had a similar experience, having published an interview with the author of this chapter. The magazine received an avalanche of pro-Kremlin comments that doubted the integrity of the reporter and the interviewee. Moreover, the magazine was accused of receiving financial support

18 See, for instance, Anna Politkovskaya, *Putin's Russia*, 1st ed. (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2007).

19 Evgeny Morozov, "What Do They Teach at the 'Kremlin's School of Bloggers'?," *Foreign Policy*, 26 May 2009, https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/05/26/what-do-they-teach-at-the-kremlins-school-of-bloggers/ (accessed 20 May 2020).

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from dubious sources. The slur campaign encouraged the chief-editors to publish a declaration in which they distanced themselves from these comments.[20] This happened a few weeks after the downing of the MH-17 airliner by a Russian BUK missile above the occupied Donbas region in eastern Ukraine. Of the 298 victims, 196 were of Dutch nationality. In the Netherlands, the deaths of 298 people became a national trauma, which made broad popular support for the Kremlin's policies an unlikely development.

In June 2015, more information about secret activities of "troll farms" became available, when Liudmila Savchuk, a former employee of the "Internet Research Agency" based in Saint Petersburg, sued her purported former employer who failed to provide her with a contract. This firm employed an estimated workforce of four hundred employees who worked in two twelve-hour shifts. They were paid relatively high salaries of approximately $780 a month for posting comments on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. Each employee was in charge of a dozen or more fake Facebook and Twitter accounts.[21]

Hiring Western Communication Firms

Beyond establishing "troll farms," which was a genuine communication innovation, Russia began to hire Western communication firms. During the Cold War, this was inconceivable, but the situation changed after 1991 and Russia's integration in the capitalist world economy. In 1997, the Russian government was accepted into an intergovernmental political forum, the G7, which became the G8. In this new international environment, it became possible for the

20 "Een hoofdredactionele reflectie op het artikel over Vladimir Poetin," *De Correspondent,* 22 August 2014, https://decorrespondent.nl/1626/een-hoofdredactionele-reflectie-op-het-artikel-over-vladimir-poetin/41674380-3b47ac5a (accessed 20 May 2020).

21 For a discussion about trolls, see Peter N. Tanchak, "The Invisible Front: Russia, Trolls, and the Information War against Ukraine," in *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine: The Challenge of Change,* ed. Olga Bertelsen (Stuttgart, Germany: ibidem-Verlag/Columbia University Press, 2017), 253–81.

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Kremlin to get access to prestigious Western lobbying and communication firms. These firms were eager to work with the Kremlin that was willing to generously pay for their services.

The first initiative was undertaken in 2006, when Russia was tasked to organize the G8 summit in Saint Petersburg. To improve its image, the Kremlin hired the prestigious New York-based firm Ketchum with its Brussels-based daughter GPlus Europe. The $2 million contract included sending twenty-five people to Saint Petersburg, who arranged interviews, established podcasts featuring Russian officials, and made a webcast of the summit with the BBC. After the event Ketchum touted that it "succeeded in helping … shift global views of Russia to recognize its more democratic nature." Its privileged contacts with the Kremlin apparently boosted Ketchum's reputation: the firm received the "2009 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner—Marketing Consumer Products," a prize from the Public Relations Society of America.[22]

The Kremlin was also satisfied, because its reputation was enhanced. In January 2007, Russia signed a two-month contract for $845,000 with Ketchum and its subsidiary, the Washington Group. The contract was worth its money. Ketchum lobbied successfully on behalf of Putin who was chosen *Time Magazine's* "Person of the Year" in 2007. The political implications of the Kremlin's cooperation with Ketchum became even more transparent during the war in Georgia in 2008, when Ketchum helped set up a web platform, called ModernRussia, later changed into ThinkRussia, which disseminated the Kremlin's views. Even Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the subsequent invasion of eastern Ukraine did not end the honeymoon between the Kremlin and the American PR firm. Although the scale of their cooperation was reduced, it was even then not suspended.

22 Takashi Inoue, *Public Relations in Hyper-globalization: Essential Relationship Management – Japan Perspective*, 1st ed. (London, U.K.: Routledge, 2018).

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The "Russian World"

The Russian propaganda offensive also included a process of *mimesis* which consisted of copying Western soft power initiatives. In 2007, Putin established the Russian World Foundation (*Russkii Mir*), an agency led by Viacheslav Nikonov, a grandson of Viacheslav Molotov. The official goal of this agency was to defend the interests of Russian speakers outside Russia and to promote Russian culture and language abroad. At the beginning, the agency targeted the former Soviet republics, but today its strategic scope is truly global. Pretending to be a cultural organization, similar to the British Council, the Alliance Française, or the German Goethe Institut, it has a clear political task: to mobilize Russian speakers all over the world to support the Kremlin's policies. Together with the Russian aid fund *Rossotrudnichestvo,* founded in 2008, the agency opened Russian Centers at foreign universities. In 2015, there were approximately 70 such centers in the United States, 14 in France, 11 in Germany, and 13 in Britain. Branches of the Chinese Confucius Institute established at university campuses served as a model for the Russians. Arthur Waldron, a Lauder Professor of International Relations at the University of Pennsylvania, who refused to open such a branch, has stated: "Once you have a Confucius Institute on campus, you have a second source of opinions and authority that is ultimately answerable to the Chinese Communist Party and which is not subject to scholarly review."[23] Subjects, such as the Dalai Lama, Tiananmen, Tibet, Taiwan, the repression of the Uighurs, and the democracy movement in Hong Kong, would be declared off limits. It is clear that similar objections can be made against the opening of Russian Centers at European and American universities. These are not independent cultural or scientific institutes, but tools in the hands of a revisionist power.

23 D. D. Guttenplan, "Critics Worry about Influence of Chinese Institutes on U.S. Campuses," *The New York Times*, 4 March 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/05/us/critics-worry-about-influence-of-chinese-institutes-on-us-campuses.html (accessed 20 May 2020).

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Financing Political Parties

The Russian information war intends not only to influence Western public opinion, Western elites' opinions, and students at Western universities, but also—more directly—governments and political parties. The Kremlin could here fall back on an old tradition, developed during the Soviet era. A famous example is the case of Günter Guillaume, the Stasi's agent who became a close aide to German chancellor Willy Brandt.[24] In his memoirs, Brandt would later write: "In hindsight, I accepted advice that I certainly should not have accepted."[25] KGB practices of planting agents of influence abroad have survived the demise of the Soviet Union, being extremely useful under Putin.

The arrest of a Russian spy ring by the FBI in the United States in June 2010 seemed to be an echo of the Cold War, reminding the world of Soviet practices. A team of eleven illegals with fake names and false passports resided in the United States for many years, living normal lives. Their mission was to gather information and to infiltrate circles close to the government. The calculations were simple: although not every "sleeper" would become a Guillaume, there was a chance that at least a few of them would succeed.

To influence foreign governments of Western countries, the Russians also used more conventional ways, such as bribing politicians and political parties. For instance, in 2004, the Lithuanian president Roland Paksas was removed from office after having accepted $400,000 from Mr. Yurii Borisov, a Russian businessman who, according to the *Economist,* was linked to the Russian security services. Another case is that of the Centre Party in Estonia, an opposition party whose members are mainly Russian speakers. Its leader, Edgar Savisaar, at that time mayor of Tallinn, was accused

24 The Guillaume affair is one of the most well-known espionage scandals in Germany during the Cold War. The exposure of Günter Guillaume revealed that he was an East German Stasi spy who was working as a close aide to the first Social Democratic Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt. After Guillaume's arrest in 1974, Brandt resigned. The Stasi was the secret service of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR).

25 Willy Brandt, *Begegnungen und Einsichten: Die Jahre 1960–1975* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1976), 586.

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by the Kapo, the Estonian intelligence service, of having asked for 1.5 million euros from Russia for his party.

In addition, there is ample evidence to suggest that in the Czech Republic, President Miloš Zeman received money for his presidential campaign from the Russian firm Lukoil. In 2014, in France the extreme right party Front National received a loan of 8 million euros from the First Czech Russian Bank. In 2016, it asked for an additional loan of 27 million euros. In November 2014 the German *Bild* reported about a dubious gold business transaction: the Eurosceptic German party *Allianz für Deutschland* (AfD) apparently bought cheap gold from Russia, which the party later resold for the world market price. Obviously, an exchange of favors and services between the Russian Federation and the AfD was guaranteed in the future through Russia financing the party. An even more subtle approach was employed in the United Kingdom in the summer of 2014. The Conservative Party received a gift of £160,000 from Lubov Chernukhin, the wife of Vladimir Chernukhin, a former deputy finance minister in Putin's government. She paid this sum to play tennis with the Prime Minister David Cameron during a fund-raising event.[26] The party rejected criticisms and accepted the money. Of course, in most cases, there is no direct quid pro quo, but certainly this transaction helps create a friendly atmosphere in which the generosity of one side might be reciprocated by the other side in the future.

Election Interference as the Kremlin's Infowar Weapon

Financing political parties offers only a limited influence. Being a donor among dozens of others cannot guarantee that the favor will be reciprocated in the future. Therefore, the Kremlin conceived a new and bold strategy—to interfere directly in the electoral process. The emergence of the social media facilitated interference practices. The Facebook platform was founded in 2004 and Twitter in 2006,

26 Rajeev Syal, "PM's Tennis Match with Wife of Former Putin Minister Will Go Ahead, Say Tories," *The Guardian,* 31 July 2014.

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which exponentially increased the number of users of social media. The American presidential election of 2016 was an excellent opportunity to test the new strategy.

In March 2016, the personal email account of John Podesta, chair of Hillary Clinton's campaign, was hacked, and his emails were stolen. According to the American intelligence services, acting under the pseudonym *Guccifer 2.0,* the hackers were affiliated with the GRU, the intelligence service of the Russian army.[27] In October and November 2016, in order to increase the impact, Podesta's stolen emails were published by WikiLeaks just before the presidential election. The impact was greater than the Kremlin expected. The fact that Clinton used her private email accounts instead of her professional email account was used by Trump in his attacks on the Democratic candidate. Podesta's emails were also used to spread fake news, such as the allegation that these emails contained coded messages that revealed the connections of Clinton and other officials, members of the Democratic Party, with human trafficking and a pizza-restaurant child sex ring, allegedly run by Clinton. This "Pizzagate" story went viral on the social media before the election. The owner of the Comet Ping Pong pizzeria in Washington, mentioned in the social media, received death threats. Moreover, on 4 December 2016, a man walked into the pizzeria with a semi-automatic rifle and fired three rounds, attempting to save the alleged victims. Fake news narratives are "sticky," and it is telling that in a poll, conducted one month after the election, even among the Clinton voters were those (17 percent) who believed that Podesta's emails contained secret information about pedophilia. For Trump voters this number was much higher—46 percent.[28]

27 Greg Miller and Adam Entous, "Declassified Report Says Putin 'Ordered' Effort to Undermine Faith in U.S. Election and Help Trump," *The Washington Post,* 6 January 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/intelligence-chiefs-expected-in-new-york-to-brief-trump-on-russian-hacking/2017/01/06/5f591416-d41a-11e6-9cb0-54ab630851e8_story.html (accessed 20 May 2020).

28 Rebecca Savransky, "Poll: Political Identity Largely Affects Belief in Conspiracies," *The Hill,* 27 December 2016, https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/311949-poll-belief-in-conspiracies-largely-depends-on-political-identity (accessed 20 May 2020).

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The Russian trace is also evident in the activities of Cambridge Analytica, a firm which collected the data of millions of Facebook users without their knowledge. The British Information Commissioner's Office discovered evidence that suggests that the files of Cambridge Analytica were accessed from Russia.[29] Damian Collins, an MP who led a parliamentary inquiry into fake news, shared his views about the possibility that the Russians had subverted Facebook users' personal information to run their advertisements in the United States during the presidential election, individually targeting voters in swing states. In a report of the British Parliamentary Intelligence Committee, it was alleged that Russian interference might also have affected the 2016 Brexit referendum, although its effect was said to be "unquantifiable."[30]

Finally, the separatist drive in Catalonia during the 2017 Catalan breakaway was likely instigated by the Russians. In 2019 in Spain, the High Court opened an investigation into a Russian spying unit in Catalonia. The activities of an elite group called Unit 29155 traced to the Russian intelligence service, the GRU, included contacts with radical Catalan separatists during the independence referendum of 2017.[31] The members of this unit reportedly participated in the poisoning of the former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in the United Kingdom in March 2018, and in the failed coup attempt in Montenegro in October 2016. Indeed, the scale and geography of Russian covert operations and Russian interference in foreign political processes are substantial, and their consequences might be detrimental to national and global security.

29 "Facebook Data Gathered by Cambridge Analytica Accessed from Russia, Says MP," *The Guardian,* 18 July 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/jul/18/facebook-data-gathered-by-cambridge-analytica-accessed-from-russia-says-mp-damian-collins (accessed 20 May 2020).

30 Caroline Wheeler, Richard Kerbaj, and Tom Harper, "Revealed: The Russia Report," *The Times,* 17 November 2019, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/revealed-the-russia-report-kz6c9mwxf?ni-statuscode=acsaz-307 (accessed 20 May 2020).

31 Oscar López-Fonseca and Fernando J. Pérez, "Spain's High Court Opens Investigation into Russian Spying Unit in Catalonia," *El País,* 21 November 2019, https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/11/21/inenglish/1574324886_989244.html (accessed 20 May 2020).

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How to Fight the Russian Infowar?

As mentioned earlier, in his 2014 book, Igor Panarin assumed that the second global information war would be won by Russia in 2020. Putin's influence campaigns and information war have destabilized the political landscape in the United States and Europe, and have helped regain Russia's influence in its "near abroad" and expand its borders. The dismemberment of the EU and Western military alliances would be welcomed by the Kremlin. The question, therefore, is: how can the Russian information war and election meddling be countered? At least, six of the following measures should be considered:

1. *Spend more money.*
   Until recently Russia has been augmenting the budget for its propaganda effort. In contrast, Western governments have been decreasing the budgets available for public diplomacy. This trend has to be inverted.
2. *Create an alternative Russian language TV station.*
   This station should be able to compete with RT. Latvia has already taken an initiative in creating a Russian language TV station. In Berlin, on 1 June 2016, Peter Tietzki's private firm *RtvD* launched Russian language TV for Russian speakers in Germany.
3. *Tell the truth.*
   Do not fall into the trap of producing "counter-propaganda" which is not trustworthy.
4. *Raise public awareness of Russian trolls' activities.*
   "Forewarned is forearmed." At the high school and college levels, an emphasis should be made on analyzing how propaganda works.
5. *Analyze the facts.*
   Russian propaganda includes misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation is false information, which is intended to deceive. Disinformation is a mixture of true and false facts designed to mislead the public. Debunking lies, half-truths, and half-lies is important. Progress has been made by the EU External Action Service that publishes weekly disinformation bulletins. In Ukraine, a private initiative entitled StopFake.org debunks myths since 2014.

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Quality papers and studies accessible by broader audiences are an effective weapon against fake news.

6. *Do not be too tolerant.*
   RT has direct access to homes of tens of millions of Europeans and Americans, while the Western media in Russia have limited possibilities in this respect. The West could ask for reciprocity as a condition for the Russian media presence in the West. Western governments should issue a series of legislations preventing RT from diffusing explicitly biased information. In the United Kingdom, there exists a media watchdog, Ofcom (Office of Communications) which ensures impartial news coverage. Several times it has found RT in breach with the British regulations, imposing punitive measures on RT. Media watchdogs in Western countries should more closely coordinate their efforts.
7. *Forbid foreign financing of political parties.*
   Foreign financing of political parties and political advertisements should be strictly forbidden.
8. *Protect the electoral process.*
   There should be designed a set of measures that would prevent outsiders from interfering in the electoral process. Voting online should therefore be discouraged and the use of voting machines restricted. Old-fashioned paper votes should be kept or reintroduced.[32]

Conclusion

In February 2020, the *Svobodnaia Pressa* (Free Press) published an article by Yurii Piskulov, an expert on trade with Finland, with the intriguing title "The Information War: Why We Lose to the West?"[33] In his article, Piskulov complained that, instead of winning the information war (as many in the West concede), Russia was losing

32 Rajkaran Gambhir and Jack Karsten, "Why Paper is Considered State-of-the-Art Voting Technology," *Brookings,* 14 August 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/techtank/2019/08/14/why-paper-is-considered-state-of-the-art-voting-technology/ (accessed 20 May 2020). Yet, the safety of this system is as debatable as the online system.

33 Yurii Piskulov, "Informatsionnaia voina: Pochemu my proigryvaem Zapadu," *Svobodnaia Pressa,* 1 February 2020, https://svpressa.ru/blogs/article/256047/ (accessed 20 May 2020).

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this war. He quoted the head of RT, Margarita Simonian, who came to the same conclusion eight years ago, blaming insufficient budget allocations to RT. Although Piskulov admitted that since that date much more money had been invested in the Russian media, he insisted that Moscow nevertheless was losing.

It may be that Piskulov's text is part of Russian propaganda and a tactical approach to solving the "Western question" once and for all. His view might assure the West that it has nothing to fear and should stop fighting an information war with Russia. The West's faith in the argument made by Piskulov and people like him, and a subsequent weakening of its effort in fighting an information war with Russia might have devastating and enduring consequences, ultimately creating a pre-condition for the realization of Igor Panarin's prediction.

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KGB Special Operations, Cultural Consumption, and the Youth Culture in Soviet Ukraine, 1968–1985

Sergei I. Zhuk

> A retired Ukrainian KGB officer has recently noted that "since 1945 until the collapse of the USSR, capitalist America was the main real adversary of the Soviet leadership and the KGB. But after the opening of Soviet Ukraine to various Western influences under Khrushchev, and especially under Brezhnev, this adversary, the U.S.A., created a new front inside Soviet society, affecting the Soviet youth culture. After 1945, enduring Ukrainian nationalism, Zionism, and religious sects became traditional targets of KGB operations in Soviet Ukraine. Since 1968, after the massive participation of Czech youth, influenced by American imperialist propaganda, in the events of the Prague Spring, a new object had emerged for KGB active measures and special operations. This object was Soviet Ukrainian youth culture, which was shaped by alien Western, especially American, influences.[1]
>
> The author's interview with Stepan Ivanovich T., a retired KGB officer, 30 January 2019, Kyiv, Ukraine

This study explores KGB active measures and special operations against Americanization/Westernization of Soviet youth culture which is analyzed here through the prism of cultural consumption in Soviet Ukraine. The first persecutions of "mass alien" groupings of college students who imitated American hippies in 1968 and campaigns against high school student neo-Nazi punks during the Andropov era is the focal point of this archival research. Through an analysis of declassified KGB documents, this study adds depth to prior attempts to analyze KGB operations targeting the youth culture in Soviet Ukraine during late socialism.[2]

1 Stepan Ivanovich referred to "active measures" that were defined by Vladimir Bukovsky as "[a]ctions of political warfare conducted by the Soviet and Russian security services (Cheka, OGPU, NKVD, KGB, FSB) ranging from media manipulation to outright violence." See Vladimir Bukovsky, *Judgment in Moscow: Soviet Crimes and Western Complicity*, trans. Alyona Kojevnikov (Westlake Village, CA: Ninth of November Press, 2019), 629.

2 I refer to the pioneering study by William Jay Risch, "Soviet 'Flower Children': Hippies and the Youth Counter-Culture in 1970s Lviv," *Journal of Contemporary*

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After the Second World War, the Soviet political police and major intelligence agency, the KGB, targeted the United States of America as the "main enemy in the world" for the USSR.[3] By late 1947, under Stalin, the United States, former major Soviet political ally in the war against Nazi Germany, had gradually become a main political and ideological enemy of the Soviet Union.[4] In this new geopolitical confrontation, the most important domestic target of the KGB was Ukrainian nationalism, which was believed to be connected to and funded by Americans. According to KGB archival documents, from 1953 until 1991, approximately 50% of all criminal cases focused on "dangerous" Ukrainian nationalists. The second most important target of the KGB in Ukraine was another type of nationalism, Judaism and Zionism (which comprised more than 30% of all criminal cases). Religious sects were identified as the third threat for the USSR (10%). The remaining 10% was allotted to

History 40, no. 3 (2005): 565–84, and his book, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), esp. 237–44. Juliane Fürst is writing now a book about Soviet hippies. See her recent publications: "We All Live in a Yellow Submarine: Life in a Leningrad Commune," in *Dropping out of Socialism: The Creation of Alternative Spheres in the Soviet Bloc*, eds. Juliane Fürst and Josie McLellan (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 197–207; and "If You're Going to Moscow, Be Sure to Wear Some Flowers In Your Hair: The Soviet Hippie Sistema and Its Life In, Despite and With Stagnation," in *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era*, eds. Dina Fainberg and Artemy Kalinovsky (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 123–46. On some aspects of Soviet youth culture, see Gleb Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption, and State-Sponsored Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1945–1970* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016) and Sergei I. Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960–1985* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press & Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010). For these publications, the authors (including myself) did not use KGB documents from the SBU Archive in Kyiv.

3 According to Christopher Andrew, "throughout the Cold War, Soviet intelligence regarded the United States as its 'main adversary.' In second place at the beginning of the Cold War was the United States' closest ally, the United Kingdom. In third position came France." See in Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 150.

4 On the transformation of the United States' image under Stalin and Khrushchev, see Rósa Magnúsdóttir, *Enemy Number One: The United States of America in Soviet Ideology and Propaganda, 1945–1959* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), esp. 73, 151.

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American espionage and foreign visitors as agents of Western intelligence. As the head of Ukraine's KGB, a general-major Vitalii Nikitchenko, noted, on 12 March 1954, "the major threat for Soviet Ukraine consist[ed] of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists, Zionists, and religious sectarians,—all of them [were] funded and organized by intelligence services of the United States and England."[5]

In 1968, thirteen years later, KGB officials expanded the scope of their special operations in Soviet Ukraine. Besides the perpetrators of Ukrainian nationalism, Jewish Zionism, and religious sects, the KGB concentrated on the problems of youth culture and American influences which, in the KGB's view, were associated with the old issues of dissident activities in Soviet society. Targeting Western influences on Soviet youth, KGB operations became an important part of active measures.

These KGB activities began during the World Youth Festival in 1957 in Moscow, when Soviet youth were exposed to contact with Western guests. As early as June 1956, Ukraine's KGB ordered the formation and special training of a group of special operatives, undercover KGB agents, to be sent to the World Youth Festival in 1957 in Moscow as official members of the delegation from Soviet Ukraine. According to official lists, composed by the KGB in Kyiv, more than 60 % of the representatives of Soviet Ukrainian youth in Moscow were undercover KGB agents.[6]

The events of the Prague Spring of 1968, which involved the mass participation of Czechoslovak youth, contributed to the KGB's anxieties about political and ideological stability in the USSR. On 21 March 1968, during the CPSU Politburo meeting in Moscow, the Ukrainian Communist Party leader Petro Shelest, frightened of "American dangerous ideological influences" being spread from Czechoslovakia to Ukraine and to the "entire socialist

5 Haluzevyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Sluzhby Bezpeky Ukrainy (hereafter: HDA SBU), f. 16, op. 1, spr. 902, ark. 35, 142. Unless otherwise stated, all excerpts from archival documents have been translated by the author from Russian into English. Compare with the original: "Главную угрозу советской Украине представляют украинские буржуазные националисты, сионисты и сектанты—все на службе и финансовой поддержке разведок США и Англии."

6 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 919, ark. 60–61.

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camp," proposed to suppress those developments immediately. Supported by Yuri Andropov, the KGB's new head, Shelest emphasized that, although it was "essential to seek out the healthy (pro-Soviet) forces in Czechoslovakia more actively," immediate "military measures" there would also be necessary. This was especially important for prevention of similar developments elsewhere, especially in Soviet Ukraine.[7]

As a result, Ukraine's KGB directed its efforts on special operations against its main enemy, capitalist America, and its influences on young Ukrainians. In the 1970s, Ukrainian nationalism in both capitalist America and socialist Ukraine was still a major concern of KGB operatives (20% of all cases). Jewish nationalism/Zionism followed suit (20%). Various Christian sects continued to be a serious problem for the KGB in Ukraine (20%). A rising problem was Crimean Tatar nationalism/Muslim activism (10%). Western intelligence in various forms, including espionage, was among the aforementioned targets of the Ukrainian KGB leadership (10%). Perceived as the United States' creation and inspiration, the Helsinki Accords of 1975 and the Soviet human rights movement posed a new threat for the KGB. A special KGB operation codenamed "BLOK" was designed to curtail the political activism of Ukrainian intellectuals, constituting approximately 10% of the KGB's counterintelligence operations.[8] Finally, a new and serious problem for the KGB campaigns, "the threat of westernization" of Soviet youth, constituted the major focus of approximately 10% of all criminal and "prophylactic" cases in the 1970s, and nearly 20% of all cases in the 1980s.[9] KGB analysts realized that "capitalist America" be-

7 Rudolf Pihoia, "Chekhoslovakia 1968 god (Part 1)," *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 6 (1994): 24–28. See also Mark Kramer, ed., "Ukraine and the Soviet-Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968 (Part I): New Evidence from the Diary of Petro Shelest," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 10 (1998): 234–47; Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield*, 251.

8 Vitalii K. Vrublevskii, *Vladimir Shcherbitskii: zapiski pomoshchnika: slukhi, legendy, dokumenty* (Kyiv: Dovira, 1993), 167–68.

9 It is based on my calculations of criminal cases from 1971 (HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1017) to 1989 (spr. 1271). An analysis of various official KGB reports to

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came not only the main, but also the "seductive adversary," creating political forms, cultural products, and practices, attractive for young Soviet consumers.[10]

The KGB, College Students, and Soviet Hippies

While observing the events in Czechoslovakia in 1967–1968, KGB officials emphasized the active involvement of Czechoslovak youth and college students in the Prague Spring.[11] In this context, KGB analysts realized an urgent necessity to seriously investigate various youth social groups in the Soviet Union. According to former KGB officers and archival documents, the most volatile, ideologically unreliable, and susceptible to Western (especially American) influences was the group of college students,[12] a notion that was consistent with the Czech trends of 1967–1968. As early as May 1967, immediately after Yuri Andropov was appointed the head of the KGB, the intelligence analysts initiated a series of research projects to study various Soviet college student groups. The KGB realized that the official sociological data provided by Komsomol ideologists and researchers from various departments of social sciences and humanities in Soviet universities (i.e., History of the Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist Philosophy, Political Economy, and Scientific Communism) were extremely orthodox, cautious and, overall, unreliable. Therefore, the KGB administration decided to employ various non-orthodox sources of information that provided them with necessary information.

The KGB operatives selected the most articulate representatives of the college student community who were ready to share

Ukraine's Communist Party leadership has confirmed the preliminary calculations (spr. 1056, ark. 1–311; spr. 1115, ark. 5–310; spr. 1115, ark. 25–301; spr. 1209, ark. 25–290).

10 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1249, ark. 147–49. On the Soviet youth's fascination with American jazz and rock music as early as September 1964, see especially the September 1964 KGB report in HDA SBU, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 1567, ark. 151–52.

11 See the material about the KGB operations and Prague Spring in Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield*, 247–61.

12 The author's interview with Ihor T., a KGB officer, 15 May 1991, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine.

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their sociological analyses with the state police. They prepared special reports/surveys of Soviet college student groups, which the KGB sent on to the Communist Party leadership. The KGB department in Kyiv sponsored a special study involving Odesa college students, which was disseminated in 1968 among all KGB officers and the party leadership as a "model" survey of a college group in Soviet Ukraine.[13] Interestingly, the most controversial and shocking observation of this 1968 survey, emphasizing the apolitical and cynical character of the students and their gradual distancing from the communist ideology, were used by the KGB in their active measures to counter the "dangerous ideological influences" in Soviet youth culture through the entire decade of the 1970s.[14] Many trends in youth behavior noted by that KGB survey of college students in 1968 survived throughout the 1980s and spread to other more numerous and much younger categories of Soviet Ukrainian youth, a phenomenon that required much more sophisticated and diverse active measures to eradicate it.

The 1968 survey highlighted the increasing political indifference, apathy, and the cynical attitude toward life among Soviet college students.[15] The students openly demonstrated their scepticism about the party and Komsomol leadership and their own membership in these organizations, which they used mainly for self-promotion purposes to advance their careers in college and enhance their opportunities on the job market.[16] According to the survey, the students' "encounters with the party and Komsomol leadership at colleges gave the impression that the Communist Party and Komsomol organizations were led by completely ignorant people who hopelessly lagged behind the modern requirements of life." As the author of the survey noted, "the college Communist Party leadership's ignorance of fashionable music, of the views of the favorite heroes of the youth, of the youth's expectations from their senior

13 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 253–88.

14 This survey was submitted to the KGB on 13 September 1968. See "Obzor: Odesskoe studenchestvo. 1968 god" ["The Odessa College Students (1968)"] in HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 255–88.

15 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 258–59.

16 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 275–76.

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colleagues, and a lack of cultural knowledge among the communist leaders—[all this] leads to their students' perceptions of them as dogmatists and reactionaries."[17]

At the same time, college students exhibited their own shocking ignorance of Marxist and Leninist philosophy, as well as of the modern trends in Western philosophy, culture, and political thought. They tried to compensate for this by listening to the broadcasts of Western radio stations and by reading the literature available at the time. They discussed what they learned with their classmates during their drinking parties either in the dorms or in bars. As a result of these experiences, students developed their own notions of the Communist Party as "the sole ruling corrupt political organization" that routinely "re-produce[d] the Soviet bourgeoisie."[18] They were ready to accept the Western propaganda's clichés about the "degeneration of the Communist Party" in the Soviet Union. According to the 1968 survey, the students no longer believed that there were "real communists" anywhere. The very word "communist" was discredited among the Soviet youth.[19] The Komsomol lost its ideological control over college students together with "its prestige and attractiveness to young people." The main reason behind the Komsomol's ideological failure rested in its inability to discover new forms of working with youth, and its absolute dependence on the institutional, party, and trade union administrations.[20] Students were sceptical about the anti-capitalist propaganda pouring from Soviet television and radio. They tried to avoid watching and listening to any kind of ideological shows that criticised the Western way of life.[21]

The 1968 survey designed to enlighten KGB officers also revealed that college students in the cities of eastern and southern Ukraine, such as Odesa and Dnipropetrovsk, exhibited their complete Russification. They "called the Ukrainian language a 'kolkhoz tongue,' considering its public usage ridiculous and bewildering"

17 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 275.
18 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 273.
19 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 274.
20 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 275.
21 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 274.

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and arguing that the "knowledge of Ukrainian language is unnecessary" because of its provincial nature: "[this is] a rural language, the language of ignorant and poorly educated people." They resented the idea that southern Ukrainian cities, like Odesa, were to be Ukrainized and expressed their negative attitude toward Kyiv, "a city and a national center, where [Ukrainian] nationalists resided." In addition, the author of the survey emphasized that "even the rural [Ukrainian-speaking] students in [the city] turned to Russian language because they wanted to appear more cultured and civilized."[22]

The survey's detailed and quite convincing description of the massive commercialization and Americanization of the youth culture in cities like Odesa appears to be the most astonishing revelation for researchers. For many students, the labels and the expression "made in the USA" became the benchmarks of how good quality products and, more broadly, successful economic and social developments could be measured. They strongly believed that the Soviet economic conditions did not leave any space for the entrepreneurial talents of Soviet people to develop and become effective drivers of the socialist enterprise. The youth contended that, like in the United States, economic competition was necessary to force out low quality products from the Soviet market. Students appreciated the freedom of opinion and expression, which they thought existed only in the West. In their minds, the main criterion of "human success was defined by the level of his/her personal material prosperity (well-being)."[23]

It is noteworthy that, on the eve of the September 1968 Plenum of the CPSU that focused on the problems of transition to the new system of planning, the city youth discussed the revival of private entrepreneurship in light industry and the service sphere. College students preferred the black market to lecture halls, demonstrating a high propensity for commercial activities. They routinely joked

22 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 277–78. For a detailed discussion about Ukrainian speakers' Russification who moved to the city of Dnipropetrovsk from the Ukrainian countryside, see Zhuk, *Rock and Roll*, 176–79.

23 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 263, 281.

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that "the Americans are wise people, and therefore they have no ruling Communist Party, [only a market]."[24]

The author of the 1968 survey further argued that beyond commercialization, the hero cult was additional evidence of the effective penetration of American values into the consciousness of Soviet youth:

> A contemporary young boy and a girl needed a real hero (as a role model), but our films showed them either unusual people in unusual situations, or personalities that were so dull and boring that they could not be an example for emulation. In this light, the heroes of Western films, strong handsome characters who solved their problems with a punch, unknowingly became the models for emulation. After watching the film *The Magnificent Seven*, half of college male students developed the walking style of Chris (the major character of the film). The youth love strength; that was why the body-building fashion, which came from the West and was initially criticized by our ideologists, achieved an unprecedented popularity in the country. Regarding this cult of strength, it is noteworthy that we witness a surprising rise of sympathy with fascism among some students. Agreeing with its blunders (such as the annihilation of Jews), they admire the attractive appearance of tall and handsome Arians (*ariitsy*), parading in the military marches …[25]

KGB analysts also identified another characteristic of the collective portrait of college students from Odesa—antisemitism and racist attitudes, especially toward African college students. Paradoxically, they physically attacked students from Africa, calling them "black-ass people" (*chornozhopye*), simultaneously supporting Czech students during the Prague Spring, and openly expressing their affinity with American jazz and beat-music.[26]

Besides such cases of racism, the idealization of fascist leaders, and antisemitism, the KGB noted the rise of Ukrainian nationalism and Zionism among college students in other eastern Ukrainian cities. In some Russian-speaking cities of eastern Ukraine, such as Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk, the KGB officers recorded frequent

24 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 280–81.

25 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 281–82. For more details about the cult of *The Magnificent Seven* among Soviet youth, see Sergei I. Zhuk, *Soviet Americana: The Cultural History of Russian and Ukrainian Americanists* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2018 [London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019]), 138–140.

26 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 281–83.

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cases of Ukrainian nationalism. They attributed the rise of nationalism in Dnipropetrovsk, for instance, to demographic and political developments, following the 1956 sensational Twentieth Party Congress. According to a KGB decision, former political prisoners who had been indicted for "Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism" and had served their prison terms in the Gulag were released. However, they were not allowed to return to their homes in western Ukraine. These prisoners, identified as *banderovtsy* in official documents, were either members or supporters of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), and/or members of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (Uniate or the Ukrainian Greek-rite Catholic Church) from the Trans-Carpathian and Galician regions of western Ukraine.[27] After 1945, when the Soviet Army suppressed these patriotic and anti-Soviet movements, thousands of adherents were exiled to Siberia and Kazakhstan. KGB officials tried to prevent any contacts between these former political prisoners and their homeland in western Ukraine. By the mid-sixties, many of these ex-prisoners settled in eastern, more Russified regions of Ukraine. The KGB tried to regiment the movements of Ukrainian nationalists and dilute them by more diverse, and less Ukrainian, people of the Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk oblasts. By 1967, 1,041 former political prisoners who were labeled "Ukrainian nationalists" from western Ukraine had settled in the Dnipropetrovsk oblast alone.[28]

This posed a danger to ideological and political control of eastern Ukraine because ex-prisoners resided in strategically important cities and their vicinity, such as Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv. The amalgamation of several factors, including a cultural influx of college students from western Ukraine to the Dnipropetrovsk oblast and ex-prisoners' influences, provoked a serious international scandal, involving a group of local young patriotic Ukrainian-speaking

27 *Banderovtsy* was derived from the name of Stepan Bandera, a leader of the OUN radical branch. His name became a symbol of the Ukrainian national cause in western Ukraine since the late 1940s. See Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 125–28, 141–51.

28 Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Dnipropetrovskoi Oblasti (hereafter: DADO), f. 19, op. 52, spr. 72, ark. 9.

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poets. They complained about the official politics of Russification in eastern Ukraine. They sent copies of their "Letter from the Creative Youth of Dnipropetrovsk," in which they documented the KGB's suppression of Ukrainian patriots and massive Russification of Soviet Ukraine, to various offices of the Communist Party, the Komsomol, and Soviet organizations and colleges in Kyiv and Dnipropetrovsk in the period from August to December of 1968.[29] Ultimately, the letter reached Ukrainian émigré centers abroad. The following spring, foreign radio stations, such as Liberty, included the text of this letter in their broadcasts.[30] In 1969–1970, the KGB managed to supress this group of young Ukrainian patriots.[31]

Until 1990, criminal cases focused on Ukrainian nationalism had always been connected to the activities of college students in Soviet Ukraine. Their "Americanization" was a serious concern for KGB officers, a process that was shaped by new forms of daily consumption of Western (in many cases, American) cultural products, especially popular music. The KGB associated this process with the emergence of hippies in Soviet Ukraine, considering the imposition of American influences on Soviet youth a political threat to the Soviet system.[32]

In Ukraine, the KGB concentrated on the hippie movement as early as 1968. The first official KGB report about this movement was

29 See the original text of this letter in Ukrainian in Raisa Lysha, Yurii Vivtash, and Orysia Sokulska, eds., *Porohy: Vybrane*, vol. 1–9 (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2009), 432–38. In August of 1968, this letter was sent to the Head of the Council of Ministers of the UkrSSR V. V. Shcherbytskyi, the Candidate Member of the Politburo of the Central Party Committee F. D. Ovcharenko, and the Secretary of the Writers' Union D. V. Pavlychko.

30 See the English translation of this letter in *The Ukrainian Review* XVI, no. 3 (1969): 46–52. This text entitled "Letter from the Creative Youth of Dnipropetrovsk" was published without the author's name. As a result of international publicity of this case, the first scholarly analysis of these events appeared in English in Kenneth C. Farmer, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the Post-Stalin Era: Myth, Symbols and Ideology in Soviet Nationalities Policy* (The Hague, Boston, London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1980), 158–59. Compare with Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights*, trans. Carol Pearce and John Glad (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 40. See also HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 977, ark. 367–71.

31 For more details, see Zhuk, *Rock and Roll*, 48–64.

32 As early as 1996, KGB documents on Soviet hippies were quoted in a book by a prominent Soviet dissident. See Bukovsky, *Judgment in Moscow,* 136.

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submitted to the party leadership in Kyiv on 20 May 1969, stating that the followers of this movement were discovered in Kyiv, Simferopol, Luhansk, Odesa, Lviv, Rivne and other Ukrainian cities. They were predominantly teenagers and young adults, students of high schools and college students. According to this document, those hippies emulated Western lifestyles to the last detail: "Some of them, using various excuses, try to avoid military service, criticize the Soviet order, lead immoral lives, use drugs, systematically establish contacts with foreigners, and are involved in black market transactions (*fartsovka*). […] Gatherings of hippies are held in private apartments and, as a rule, are accompanied by parties with alcohol and listening to new releases of foreign jazz music that are frequently ended in orgies."[33] The transgressor established contacts with like-minded people in Ukraine and outside the republic. To better explain the hippie phenomenon to party leaders, KGB analysts interjected excerpts from an analytical article on American hippies, written by an American social psychologist from Yale University, Kenneth Keniston, and published in Russian translation in the American magazine *Amerika*.[34] The Soviet leadership immediately ordered the KGB to design active measures regarding this new cultural phenomenon popular among the Soviet youth.

33 HDA SBU, f. 16, op.1, spr. 974, ark. 114–15.

34 Ibid. See also *Amerika*, no. 150, April 1969, pp. 12–18. *Amerika* was a monthly periodical published in Russian by the U.S. Information Agency, beginning from 1959. KGB analysts discussed a shorter version of Keniston's article published in *Amerika* in Russian translation. For a full version, see Kenneth Keniston, "Youth, Change and Violence," *The American Scholar* 37, no. 2 (1968): 227–45. The KGB was concerned about the Soviet hippies who, like their American counterparts, might use political violence and create alternative political structures that would disrupt the political status quo. According to Keniston's interpretation, that is what American hippies tried to accomplish. Those Soviet hippies planned to participate "in the all-Union congress during this summer (1969) either in Riga, or Tallinn." Even recent graduates of high schools demonstrated a similar behavior in 1969 and 1970. Some of them organized a secret society in the city of Slaviansk (Donetsk oblast), known as "Koka-Kola," "expressing their protest against the existing political order." See HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1009, ark. 167–68. Among numerous studies on hippies as part of American counterculture, the best historical analysis was offered by Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle in their "Introduction: Historicizing the American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s" to *Imagine Nation: The American*

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As a response, on 16 February 1971, KGB officials submitted another, more detailed, report to party leaders with a description of active measures to curtail this movement.[35] The KGB intended to conduct these operations in the cities where this movement originated—in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa, Donetsk, Voroshylovhrad, Zaporizhzhia, Simferopol, Rivne, Poltava, Kirovohrad, Sumy, and Chernivtsy. The members of hippie groups were divided into two social groups: 1) *fartsovshchiks* (black marketers) and 2) *bitlomans*, the fans of "beat-music" (Anglo-American rock-n-roll).[36] The KGB's main concern, however, laid in the sphere of ideology: "While the hippies in the West protest against bourgeois society's rules, their emulators in our country advocate the revision of moral and ethical norms of the socialist way of life, striving to create their own moral norms."[37] Despite the fact that the majority of the movement's members were college students (including college dropouts), the leaders were more mature individuals, who explained the emergence of hippies in the USSR by political motives. According to the KGB, they positioned themselves as the articulators of oppositionist ideas and formulators of a program of activities. To illustrate the political danger of these people, KGB operatives quoted "one of the authorities" among the Kharkiv hippies, A. L. Kleshcheiev who explained to the KGB officer:

> … We advocate democracy, the free choice of moral norms (*svoboda nravov*), free speech, freedom of creativity, freedom to propagandize our own ideas, freedom to demonstrate, free love, and behavior unlimited by moral constraint. A society should not interfere in the [development of] personality: if I do not impose on other people, I do what I want to do—I can sit or lie down where I want; if there is the possibility to live without working—I avoid working, because our needs are minimal; I want to be dressed in what I'd like or go naked; I want to spend the night where I'd like, and travel where I like. Because these [options] are unavailable to us, my friends and I believe that our [Soviet] authorities do wrong things […] we have no full freedom

Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002), 5–14.

35 HDA SBU, f. 16, op.1, spr. 1011, ark. 81–92 (with a hand-written note by a party secretary "Report personally on the measures" on ark. 81). See a copy of the same report in HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1009, ark. 317–28.

36 On those groups, see Zhuk, *Rock and Roll*, 79–92, 97–105.

37 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1011, ark. 81.

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> and democracy; and people who have power to change [this situation] are narrow-minded and do not understand our demands. We conclude that at this stage, under this political system [in the USSR], it is unlikely that we can achieve our goals […] the West seems to us more progressive and democratic than our [political] regime …[38]

In their reports to Ukraine's party boss Petro Shelest, KGB officials suggested that the hippies' behavior in public was unacceptable. Drinking, gambling, drug abuse, black market transactions (*fartsovka*), and sexual perversions became habitual for the hippies. Their gatherings at restaurants, cafes, and city parks began to attract public attention because of their obscene language, improper appearance, and offensive behavior. The KGB also informed Shelest that these individuals attempted to avoid the military draft and any type of socially useful work, lived the lives of vagabonds, and engaged in seditious conversations. According to KGB analysts, this behavior was shaped by the ideologically harmful influence of foreign radio broadcasting that the hippies systematically listened to.[39] The major KGB concern was to prevent the hippies from organizing and establishing an intercity communication network. There was information about such attempts when in 1969 the representatives of various hippie groups in Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, and Voroshylovhrad tried to organize the first republican, and then all-Union, congresses that would help unite all hippies in one centralized organization. The objective of this organization would be sharing literature and art to popularize the ideas and the philosophy of hippies. The KGB operatives infiltrated the most active groups, undermining their efforts from inside.[40]

As a result of these "prophylactic measures" against hippies in 1970, KGB officers were able to offer their bosses a general picture of hippie groups and their origin. Twenty members of two hippie groups in Kharkiv served as the model for their investigations. The KGB learned that their initial impulse for gathering together

38 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1011, ark. 82.

39 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1011, ark. 85.

40 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1011, ark. 84. "In April 1970, more than 100 hippies from different cities of the USSR, including Lviv, met in Vilnius, where they had a non-official festival of acoustic music (without electric instruments)."

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came from their passion for western (rock) music. In 1968, two students, A. Soloviev and A. Makarenko, and one dropout, Yu. Shatunovskii, from the Kharkiv State University, created an "amateur club of fans" of rock music that in 1968 and 1969 organized numerous so-called "psycho-concerts" in their private apartments and in the basements and stairways of public places. According to KGB reports, the ideologically dangerous events included music by foreign music stars, including "songs of obscene content, questionable in a political and artistic sense." The KGB emphasized that these individuals planned to unite up to 2000 people, and they even wrote a program that stipulated the rights and duties of its members. The conspiratorial club "Society of Fighters for the Flaming Heart of Danko" (Klub bortsov plamennykh serdets Danko) was named after Danko, a character from Maxim Gorky's *Old Izergil*, who sacrificed himself, saving his people with his flaming heart. The club members adopted a song performed by the the British rock band "The Animals" as its anthem.[41]

In October of 1969, Makarenko and Shatunovskii made an attempt to organize a demonstration of their followers at the Dzerzhynskyi Square in downtown Kharkiv. They planned to publicly demand the official recognition of their hippie organization by local authorities. The KGB conducted a special operation to curtail these activities, arresting ten Kharkiv hippie activists. Similarly, in April of 1970 in Voroshylovhrad, nine participants of a local hippie group were arrested for using drugs in public. The same month, the KGB reported that a hippie group from Zaporizhzhia organized a march in the city, attempting to popularize their ideas. Also Lviv had their own share of hippies: in December of 1970, 22 local hippies composed a statute (*ustav*) of the hippie club, planning a similar action. In April of 1971, 30 hippies from Ivano-Frankivsk organized a rock concert at the city's central square. The evening of 18 June 1971 in Chernivtsi became memorable for the arrest of 17 hippies by KGB

41 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1011, ark. 85–86. The third part of Gorky's *Old Izergil* entitled "The Flaming Heart of Danko" was an obligatory reading in Russian literature classes in Soviet high schools. Writing the report, a KGB officer, by mistake, presented the British rock band "The Animals" as American. ("Amerikanskii modernistskii ansambl 'Zhivotnyie'" in the original, ark. 86).

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operatives. To celebrate Paul McCartney's birthday, the hippies had marched in the streets, carrying hand-made banners with his portrait, completely paralyzing Chernivtsi's downtown. Numerous arrests by the KGB eventually ceased these public actions, but not the movement itself.[42] It kept growing, especially in the capital city of Kyiv.

By late 1969, the KGB discovered more than 170 hippies in Kyiv and uncovered their "president." S. Baiev, a dropout from the Kyiv Pedagogical Institute, tried to unite and consolidate the movement in Kyiv. Baiev's behavior was rather provocative. He maintained contacts with foreign tourists and journalists, especially with Americans, and publicly criticized the Soviet system. He and his followers condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet troops, expressing their desire to escape abroad.[43] Despite KGB active and prophylactic measures (arrests, expulsions from the Komsomol and colleges, interrogations of the participants and their parents), the hippie groups in Kyiv survived. In 1974, another hippie leader and a student of the Department of Biology at the Kyiv State University, Oleh Pokalchuk, reenergized the movement, accentuating the religious (spiritual) dimension in the life of Ukrainian hippies. Pokalchuk conceptualized a "Buddhist commune" as a new hippie model for his followers. During 1974–1975, the KGB documented active interactions of Ukrainian hippies with Orthodox Christian and Baptist communities, and the growing Krishnaite movement in Soviet Ukraine. These links helped them eventually connect with their foreign co-religionists.[44]

42 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1011, ark. 87–88; f. 16, op. 1, spr. 993, ark. 358–61; f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1015, ark. 325.

43 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1011, ark. 88–89.

44 On Pokalchuk, see HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1095, ark. 182–85; for more on the hippies' engagement with the Orthodox Church in Kupiansk, see HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1089, ark. 321; for a report about the substantial growth of Krishnaites in Ukraine, see HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1175, ark. 132–34, and f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1184, ark. 36–37. See also DADO, f. 19, op. 60, spr. 85, ark. 7, 17, and Zhuk, *Rock and Roll*, 200, 201, 205. Some police officers reported that the hippies had publicly displayed various religious symbols, such as Christian crosses and icons, as well as portraits of Krishna and Buddha.

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On 11 October 1979, in his official report to Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi, Vitalii Fedorchuk, head of the Ukrainian KGB, acknowledged the KGB failure to stop the "*hippisty*" movement in Ukraine. According to his statistics, the KGB recorded 80 criminal cases launched against those "who imitated Western hippies" in various regions of Ukraine: Lviv 48, Donetsk 6, Crimea 5, Poltava 5, Zaporizhzhia 5, Dnipropetrovsk 4, Kyiv 2, Kherson 2, Ternopil 2, Chernihiv 1. Among them, 65 people were between 16 and 25 years of age, and 15 people between 26 and 30 years of age; 64 were males, and 16 were females.[45] Thirteen of them had been "targets of active KGB measures;" 10 were "involved in ideologically harmful actions;" 3 were indicted for criminal offences; 8 were arrested for manufacturing and selling drugs; 27 were arrested for using drugs; 15 were receiving medical treatment in mental institutions; 10 were "arrested for avoiding military service; and approximately 50% of all Ukrainian hippies did not study or work."[46] As late as April 1987, the KGB still confirmed the existence of the "hippies-pacifists" in Ukraine who called themselves "*Sistema*." Overall, there were 60 hippies in the republic (mainly in Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv, Odesa, and Simferopol), and 30 in Kyiv.[47]

KGB reports offered the Ukrainian communist leadership a relatively thorough sociological analysis of the hippie movement and KGB active measures that were employed from 1969 to 1987 to curtail the movement in Ukraine. Based on interviews with former hippies, one such report stated:

> On the one hand, there are young people, who (due to their young age) aspire to something unusual and romantic, reading a certain type of literature […] and are keen on their crazy ideas and colorful clothes […] (which allow them to stand out among their peers). On the other hand, there is another group of young people who understand very well the incompatibility of the hippies' ideas with the Soviet system, nevertheless, joining the movement consciously. [These] people […] make money using this movement, i.e., selling clothes ("*fartsuiut barakhlom*"), drugs, and other things […] [they] criticize ("*khaiut*") all Soviet things, calling them "*sovdela*" (Soviet stuff) […] [and] want to escape to the West, inciting others to do the same. […] many

45 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1162, ark. 126.
46 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1162, ark. 128.
47 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1249, ark. 147.

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> of them maintain connections with people living abroad, write and send letters abroad; they have relatives or friends there, or routinely establish contacts with foreigners visiting the city […] In their milieu, they propagandize "free love," freedom of behavior and actions, parasitism and reluctance to obey (Soviet) laws and moral norms, calling this coercion […] They insist that "we have no democracy if we have only one ruling political party," and that people should enjoy their lives instead of wasting it for the state …[48]

For the KGB, the major threat of the hippie movement seemed to be the politicization of Soviet youth and the emergence of political practices among them. The KGB identified this as the "institutionalization" of Soviet hippies, which was ultimately a dangerous alternative to Soviet youth institutions such as the Komsomol. KGB operatives feared the spread of this movement: the tentacles of the underground hippie clubs reached all major industrial cities. For instance, in February 1971 in Kirovohrad, local hippies organized the anti-Komsomol "Union of Free Youth" that included 20 members. They planned to organize a mass demonstration of the "free youth" of Kirovohrad, designed to mobilize young people for a collective fight for "freedom of speech, free love, and freedom of demonstrations."[49] The active measures of the local KGB office, including the infiltration of this hippie organization by KGB undercover officers, managed to prevent these activities.

The ideological justification for KGB covert operations against the youth culture were the hippies' alleged connections to fascism and neo-fascism portrayed as an intrinsic feature that underpinned the Prague Spring. In the KGB analysis, the hippies were active collaborators of pro-fascist elements in Czechoslovakia who allegedly inspired the 1968 Prague Spring. Similar claims related to socialist

48 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1011, ark. 90. KGB officers, who studied local hippies, distanced themselves from the "ideological nonsense" of Komsomol periodicals, which wrote that the "American hippies were a satanic sect embracing a mixture of palmistry, astrology, and black magic, and that the hippies were looking for a virgin girl for their devilish black mass ritual and could not find such girls among themselves." See the author's interview with Stepan Ivanovich T., a retired KGB officer, 30 January 2019, Kyiv, Ukraine. He referred to Mykola Solomatin, "Zhertvy chornoi magii," *Ranok,* no. 1, January 1974, pp. 18–19.

49 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1015, ark. 324–25.

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Hungary, where hippie groups were arrested for allegedly collecting intelligence for one of the Western diversion spy centers. In 1971, the KGB exploited the same ideological arguments when analyzing the activities of Ukraine's hippies who allegedly spread fascist ideas. The declarations made by Oleksandr Balykin, a student at the Mykolaiv Ship-Building Institute, about the similarities between the modern youth's worldview and Hitler's ideas discarding conscience, shame, and morality, served as supporting evidence for the KGB. Its analysis also included a Ukrainian hippie group from Lviv as an example of this connection, highlighting their "black ties," crosses, and swastikas that the hippies displayed on numerous occasions publicly.[50] The alleged links between the hippie and fascist ideologies gave the KGB carte blanche to act aggressively and curtail the political activism of youth in Soviet Ukraine.

Clearly, the Czech youth political activities in 1968 forced the KGB to think about the Ukrainian hippies' political activism in similar terms. The commercialization of Soviet youth culture and disco music that became extremely popular among Soviet youth seemed innocent in comparison with political statements made by the hippies and their attempts to organize. The KGB arrested hundreds of Ukrainian imitators of American hippies and expelled them from universities and the Komsomol all over Ukraine. Ukrainian punks who were similarly portrayed as neo-Nazi presented the same threat to the Soviet system, the Soviet Ukrainian culture, and the Soviet identity of Komsomol members.

The KGB Anti-Fascist Campaign

The KGB documented two massive organized youth movements in Soviet Ukraine after Stalin, which challenged the very existence of the Komsomol, an official Soviet youth organization, and offered the venues for anti-Soviet activities in which thousands of Komsomol members participated in the 1960s–1980s. The hippie movement emerged first, followed by the punk "imitation" movement.

50 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1015, ark. 323.

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At the beginning, the members of both movements had some cultural fixation with Western cultural products, mainly rock music and films, but by the 1980s their cultural practices evolved embracing neo-Nazi ideas, processes that were documented by the KGB. These practices became more prominent, and even radical, especially among Soviet imitators of Western punks.[51] Moreover, in contrast to the Ukrainian followers of hippies who were older and more college educated, adopting American cultural practices of pacifism and non-violence, the Ukrainian punks were much younger, with only high school education, and they adopted more radical, violent, and sometimes explicitly neo-fascist models informed by the neo-fascist movements that emerged in Italy, Germany, and Britain after 1945.

In the fall of 1982, in their letters to Ukraine's communist leaders, KGB officers persisted in their claims that Soviet Ukrainian youth exhibited clear affinity with neo-Nazi and fascist ideas. The KGB discovered numerous pictures of fascist swastika on sidewalks and the walls of public buildings and telephone booths in many Ukraine cities, including the city of Chernivtsi. In September 1982, the KGB established the identity of at least five former students of the local technical schools (all of them were between 17 and 19 years of age) who were engaged in those "neo-fascist" activities. The report stated that they all listened to American "beat-music worshipping American pop-idols," which profoundly shaped their worldviews.[52]

In addition, the KGB report stressed that the Italian film *San Babila – 8 PM* (in Italian: *San Babila ore 20: un delitto inutile*), a "film about the outrages of fascist youth [in Italy] [*beschinstvakh fashistvuiushchei molodiozhi*]," contributed to those young people's interest in fascist ideology, symbols, and paraphernalia.[53] This film was directed by Carlo Lizzani in 1976, and was included in the program of the Tenth Moscow International Film Festival in 1977. The idea of the film was inspired by violent events that took place at the

51 Zhuk, *Rock and Roll*, 102, 103, 170–71, 267–79.

52 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1200, ark. 68; the author's interview with Stepan Ivanovich T., a retired KGB officer, 30 January 2019, Kyiv, Ukraine.

53 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1200, ark. 68.

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Piazza San Babila in Milan in 1975. Groups of neo-fascists and anarchist communists became the protagonists for this film. Four Milanese boys were part of a neo-fascist group that subscribed to Benito Mussolini's ideas of a new order, based on "*squadrism*."[54] The boys were fighting against the youth groups of communists and anarchists and frequently collided during the protests with violent outcomes. As the film portrays, one day the leader of the neo-fascist group asked Franco, the most insecure boy of the brigade, to perform a violent and demonstrative act against a randomly chosen communist boy, in order to redeem his "honor." So one night at the Piazza San Babila, the boys met a couple of lovers, dressed in red (they were believed to be communists). The group's state of madness drove the boys to chase the lovers and stab them. Franco was shocked and ran away from home, denouncing the assault to the police.

The KGB officer realized that the young Ukrainian imitators of Italian neo-fascism were especially influenced by the images of fashionable outfits and behavioral patterns of the young neo-fascist heroes from this Italian film.[55] At home the young men listened to forbidden rock music broadcast by foreign radio stations, organized their meetings at a Chernivtsi downtown café, and publicly denounced the Soviet system and politics.[56] Two of them, the leaders of that group, openly discussed the potential replacement of the Soviet political system that, in their view, was absolutely necessary, and a transfer of political power to a "military regime" that would manage the state through the fascist methods of political governing. The police discovered that these individuals displayed large images of a swastika in public. They were also suspected of another transgression: on 10 May 1981 someone burned the Soviet state banner,

54 *Squadrismo* is an Italian term for the Italian fascist movement, based on armed squads and led by Benito Mussolini. See Roberta Suzzi Valli, "The Myth of *Squadrismo* in the Fascist Regime," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 35 (2000): 131–50.

55 The author's interview with Stepan K., a retired KGB/SBU officer, 2 February 2019, Kyiv, Ukraine.

56 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1200, ark. 68.

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hanging on the façade of a public building in downtown Chernivtsi.[57]

Moreover, these individuals argued that the Soviet political system must be replaced by the strong authoritarian power of the fascist state because the Soviet state was nothing less than a "mafia state" and the rule of the Soviet Communist Party was a "mafia rule." The police also learned that these references were widespread, and young neo-fascists embraced this terminology in all major Ukrainian cities. The depositions of those who were arrested were consistent, emphasizing the significant influence of the Italian film on them.[58]

The KGB Campaign against the Punks

In Soviet Ukraine, the KGB campaign against young neo-fascists converged with the old ideological campaign against the corrupt influences of Western popular music. This campaign was conceived in the 1960s as a struggle against the "beat music" of the Beatles and Rolling Stones and their hippie imitators, being reconceptualised as a campaign against "fascist punks" and reaching its peak in 1980–1981. To some extent, this campaign was a reaction to information published in Soviet central periodicals, where British punks were presented as neo-fascists and "skinheads." In this light, the connection between Western music, the punk movement, and fascist symbols established by the KGB became more transparent. They all were to be prohibited from mass consumption in the Soviet Union.

According to Soviet music critics, the description of punks as fascists offered in Soviet periodicals confused and disoriented thousands of communist ideologists in provincial cities of Soviet Ukraine:

> The only thing anyone knew about punks was that they were "fascists" because that's how our British-based correspondents had described them for us. Several angry feature articles appeared in the summer and fall of 1977

57 Ibid.

58 The author's interview with Stepan K., retired SBU/KGB officer, 2 February 2019, Kyiv, Ukraine. For more details about these Italian films, see Zhuk, *Rock and Roll*, 145–48.

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> with lurid descriptions of their unsavoury appearance and disgraceful manners, including one that quoted sympathetically a diatribe from the *Daily Telegraph*. To illustrate all this, a few photos of "monsters" with swastikas were printed … The image of punks as Nazis was established very effectively, and in our country, as you should understand, the swastika will never receive a positive reaction, even purely for shock value.[59]

Indeed, Soviet propagandists shaped the views of KGB officials and Komsomol activists who believed that punks and fascists were the same. All Komsomol functionaries and those who ran discotheques in Soviet Ukraine received a special notice warning against the punk ideology. The warning included Russian translations of phrases employed by British punks. This information was reprinted in many publications by Ukrainian journalists who covered this anti-punk campaign. In their texts, they quoted the punk slogans: "Live only for today! Do not think about tomorrow! Do not give a damn about all these spiritual crutches of religion, utopia, and politics! Forget about this. Enjoy your day. You are young, and do not be in a hurry to become a new young corpse" [sic!]. Unfailingly, they emphasized the anti-human essence of "fascist punk music" that allegedly embodied "bestial cynicism and meanness," undermining the Soviet youth's moral principles.[60]

The first public scandal that involved both "fascist music" and the display of fascist symbols took place in the city of Dnipropetrovsk in the fall of 1982. The city police arrested two college students, Ihor Keivan and Oleksandr Plastun who owned record collections of Western music and whose public behavior was described as "neo-Nazi." These students were dressed in T-shirts with the images of

59 Artemy Troitsky, *Back in* the *USSR: The True Story of Rock in Russia* (London: Omnibus Press, 1987), 42–43.

60 Even during Gorbachev's *perestroika*, local journalists and KGB officials still employed these materials. They reprinted some of the British punks' declarations for Komsomol ideologists' needs and tasks. See L. Gamolsky, N. Efremenko, and V. Inshakov, *Na barrikadakh sovesti: Ocherki, razmyshleniia, interviu* (Dnipropetrovsk: Politizdat, 1988), 139. The author's interview with Igor T., a KGB officer, 15 May 1991, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine; the author's interview with Mikhail Suvorov, 1 June 1991, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine. For a discussion about similar practices in Hungary, see Anna Szemere, *Up from the Underground: The Culture of Rock Music in Postsocialist Hungary* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

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American and Australian rock bands "Kiss" and "AC/DC," which attracted the attention of policemen who interpreted these images as "fascist." After Keivan's and Plastun's arrest, their "fascist" record collections were confiscated, and the information about these students' anti-Soviet behavior was sent to their colleges.

In December of 1982, the entire city of Dnipropetrovsk and the Dnipropetrovsk oblast were shaken by police raids and searches, part of the anti-fascist and anti-punk campaign. The Dnipropetrovsk City Party Committee approached Nadezhda A. Sarana, an experienced Communist and a member of the anti-fascist resistance group during the Second World War, and asked her to write a letter about the dangers of the local fascist punks' fashion statements. On 22 December 1982, the communist functionaries staged an open public meeting with participation of all communist and Komsomol activists in Dnipropetrovsk's downtown. During this event, they publicly endorsed Sarana's letter against the punks and declared war against the punk movement in Soviet Ukraine. Under KGB pressure, local ideologists organized a show trial of Keivan, Plastun, and another young punk, Vadym Shmeliov, that was held in January of 1983. All three were expelled from the Komsomol and their colleges. KGB officers were outraged when they learned that Keivan and Plastun interpreted this punishment as a violation of their human rights. This case established the precedent and routine practices of Komsomol cells in the region to purge those members who were suspected of enthusiasm for the forbidden music.[61]

61 The author's interview with Mikhail Suvorov, 1 June 1991, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine; see also the Communist Party veteran Nadezhda Sarana's open letter entitled "We Declare War against Everybody Who Interferes in Our Lives and Work!" [*Boi tem, kto meshaet nam stroit i zhit*!], denouncing the local punks, and A. Liamina and L. Gamolskii, "Grazhdaninom byt obiazan" about the 22 December 1982 public trial in Dnipropetrovsk in *Dnepr vechernii,* 23 December 1982, p. 3. Compare these texts with that of the activists' reaction in "Iz vystuplenii uchastnikov sobraniia," in *Dnepr vechernii,* 23 December 1982, p. 3. See also L. Vasilieva, "Takim ne mesto sredi nas!" *Dnepr vechernii,* 10 January 1983, p. 3.

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This anti-punk campaign especially affected the Ukrainian fans of heavy metal music.[62] In 1983, the Dnipropetrovsk police arrested ten students from a local vocational school on charges of "hooliganism." The police discovered images of the Nazi era and of the American Ku Klux Klan in their possession. As it turned out, Serhii Onushev, Oleksandr Rvachenko, and their friends made white robes and put the letters KKK on them, impersonating their membership in this American organization.[63] Serhii Onushev was identified as the leader of this group, who listened to the tapes that included the music of the bands that "belonged to the pro-fascist movement—Kiss, Nazareth, AC/DC, and Black Sabbath."[64] Local ideologists established a direct connection between this music and the fascist inclinations of Onushev's group. According to them, the musicians of Kiss represented a group of four hooligans, who chose SS and Nazi symbols as the emblems of their band, tearing apart live chickens and vomiting during their performances. They emphasized that, for Soviet students, they had become idols and "trendsetters" in popular culture, inspiring young Soviet people to commit inhuman fascist acts.[65]

The case of Dmitrii Frolin, a student of the Department of Philology at Dnipropetrovsk University, became another sensational case that attracted the attention of local journalists. As a result of the anti-punk and anti-fascist campaign, Frolin was arrested in 1983 and expelled from both the Komsomol and the university in 1985 for "propaganda of fascism." Local ideologists pointed out that Frolin's activities were the direct result of "intensive listening" to the music by "fascist bands," such as Kiss and AC/DC: "Over his bed, Frolin put a fascist cross and a poster with the faces of the members of the band Kiss, distorted in non-human grimaces with

62 Heavy metal music, known as "metal," is a genre of rock music that emerged in the late 1960s and further developed in the early 1970s in the United Kingdom and the United States.

63 Gamolsky, Efremenko, and Inshakov, *Na barrikadakh sovesti,* 133.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.,134. In 1984–1985, some university students suffered persecutions for having posters of the British band Black Sabbath. The author's interview with Oleksandr Beznosov, 19 July 2008, the Department of History, Dnipropetrovsk University, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine.

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ugly make up (Frolin paid forty rubles for this Kiss poster on the 'black market'). In addition, he had a variety of audio tapes with the music of Kiss and AC/DC. Just press a button of his tape recorder and you will hear this music."[66] A journalist called the audience to consider the ideological implications of these activities:

> They, the musicians of AC/DC, call themselves the devil's children. Their song "Back in Black" became an anthem of the American Nazi Party. During a Komsomol meeting, Dmitrii justified his behavior by saying: "I do not consider myself collecting such things a crime. This is just mere collecting. It does not matter what the subject of this collection is. These items reflect a certain period in the history of these people. I consider listening to my favorite music and collecting music records part of my private life. And I have a right to protect my privacy, according to Soviet and international laws."[67]

In December of 1983, a local youth periodical published the results of a sociological analysis of ideological maturity among Dnipropetrovsk youth, compiled by the Komsomol scholars. According to their findings, special Komsomol raids discovered images of the American band Kiss in many student dorms at Dnipropetrovsk colleges. One could easily observe the SS symbols and Nazi signs on these images. The analysis also included a concern pertaining to the visual appearance of young people, stating that the majority of the student population in Dnipropetrovsk were wearing T-shirts that had images of the U.S. military insignia and ones that glorify capitalist countries hostile to the Soviet Union. Apparently, they purchased these T-shirts on the black market, wearing them even during their classes.[68]

According to KGB officers, the "youth culture of fascist music" was shaped by the idealization of Hitler and Ukrainian nationalist leaders, such as Stepan Bandera, who were active during the Second

66 Gamolsky, Efremenko, and Inshakov, 135–36.

67 The journalist continued: "Let's think again! There is no justification for collecting the Nazi regalia! Many people in the West understand this. Leon Rappoport, an American professor from the University of Kansas, was absolutely right, when he sincerely declared: 'Collecting Nazi relics is certainly one of the forms of fascist propaganda.'" See Gamolsky, Efremenko, and Inshakov, 135–36; the author's interview with Mikhail Suvorov, 1 June 1991, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine.

68 Yu. Lystopad, "Ideolohichna borotba i molod (Notatky z oblasnoi naukovo-praktychnoi konferentsii)," *Prapor iunosti,* 17 December 1983, p. 2.

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World War. In 1983 and 1984, the police arrested the members of a "fascist Banderovite group," students at the Dnipropetrovsk Agricultural Institute. These students, Konstantin Shipunov and his five followers, listened to "fascist rock music," organized their own party, and popularized the ideas of Nazi leaders and Ukrainian nationalist politicians. They criticized the Russification of cultural life in Ukraine, advocated Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union, and insisted on protecting the national rights of all Ukrainian patriots.[69]

The criminal cases of Ukrainian "fascist" heavy metal fans reveal interesting connections among various forms of cultural consumption in Soviet Ukraine in 1982–1984. The arrested members of Onushev's and Shipunov's groups confessed that they were inspired by the images of "clean, intelligent and civilized" Nazi officers portrayed in the Soviet TV series *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (1973). Based on the novel by Yulian Semenov, a famous Soviet writer of mystery and spy novels, this TV series narrated the story of Shtirlitz (Viacheslav Tikhonov), a Soviet agent posing as a high-ranking Nazi officer in Hitlerite Germany in the spring of 1945, during the final months of the Second World War. Like Carlo Lizzani's film about Milanese fascists, this film became a real blockbuster during the 1970s and early 1980s in the USSR, romanticized in the imaginations of many "fascist" heavy metal fans and local "punks" who tried to emulate the dress code and behavior of Shtirlitz and other Nazi characters from this Soviet film.[70]

As early as December of 1983, the secretary of the Dnipropetrovsk regional Komsomol committee O. Fedoseev reported to the Komsomol Central Committee in Kyiv that in February–March of 1983, local ideologists encountered the rise of the punk movement in the city of Dnipropetrovsk, but they successfully mobilized all activists and "Soviet patriots," organizing special counter-propaganda

69 Gamolsky, Efremenko, and Inshakov, 137.

70 For more about this film and similar cases during *perestroika*, see Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 152, 168, 170; interview with Ihor T., a retired KGB officer, 15 May 1991, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine; Ihor T. also mentioned the Italian film's influences on Ukraine's youth.

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events all over the city and the Dnipropetrovsk oblast. As a result, they managed to curtail this "fascist movement." The Dnipropetrovsk oblast Komsomol organization developed political measures on "how to fight fascist punks," which became a model for the entire republic. The KGB administration approved those measures.[71]

However, between 1982 and 1985, the KGB and the police identified twenty new groups of neo-fascists/punks in Ukraine who had hundreds of followers. Arrested by the police and interrogated by the KGB, the members of these groups employed various fascist symbols and paraphernalia, painted their faces "in punk fashion," and shaved their temples.[72] Only a few of them, however, had anything to do with the Nazi ideology or fascism.

Conclusion

The KGB's anti-hippie, anti-fascist, and anti-punk campaigns in Soviet Ukraine were intended to weaken young Ukrainians' fascination with the products of Western (especially American) popular culture, such as films and pop music, and their idealization of Western neo-fascist images and culture. However, the results of these campaigns were contrary to what had been expected. The campaigns contributed to the immense popularity of forbidden Western cultural products among young consumers. Ironically, these campaigns amplified the interest in Western culture among the transgressors' ideological supervisors who were supposed to erase it from the imagination of the Soviet youth.

Yet, there was another surprising and dangerous outcome of the anti-punk campaign in Soviet Ukraine, accentuated by KGB officers and local propagandists. During 1982–1984, the KGB active measures targeting "fascist punks" and the authorities' hostile and coercive actions against disobedient youth encouraged young people

71 Tsentralnyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Hromadskykh Obiednan Ukrainy (TsDAHOU), f. 7, op. 20, spr. 3087, ark. 43 ("Otchet Dnepropetrovskogo OK LKSMU ot 23 dekabria 1983 g.").

72 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1197, ark. 30–31, 68–69; spr. 1200, ark. 236–237; interview with Ihor T., a retired KGB officer, 15 May 1991, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine.

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to think about the state in political terms, and to openly criticize the Soviet political system, identifying it as a mafia state.[73] Since 1967 and the anti-hippie campaigns in Soviet Ukraine, the KGB feared the potential "politicization" of cultural consumption by local youth. The drastic difference between the peaceful and relatively a-political Soviet hippies' behavior and that of the Ukrainian "fascist punks" inspired by Italian films and Anglo-American rock music exacerbated the KGB's fear. The political behavior of young Komsomol members became a dangerous cultural phenomenon. Their political programs, adopting neo-fascist cultural practices, challenged the Soviet political system that had to be replaced by a "more efficient, honest and stable" authoritarian system. Worse, many Ukrainian punks demanded the "liberation of Ukraine from Russian exploitation."[74] The cultural trends among young Soviet Ukrainians analyzed in this study—the mixture of popular culture and political nationalism—survived the KGB persecution, foreshadowing the distinct signs of revival in post-Soviet contemporary Ukraine.

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73 On how Soviet young consumers used films about the Italian mafia by Damiano Damiani to criticize the USSR as a mafia state, see Sergei I. Zhuk, "'The Disco Mafia' and 'Komsomol Capitalism' in Soviet Ukraine during Late Socialism," in *Material Culture in Russia and the USSR: Things, Values, Identities*, ed. Graham H. Roberts (London and Oxford: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 173–95.

74 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1192, ark. 68–69; f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1199, ark. 49.

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The KGB Operation "Retribution" and John Demjanjuk

Olga Bertelsen

From 1950 to 1952, Jim McDonald, a U.S. Navy veteran of the Second World War who received three battle stars, worked closely with the U.S. Displaced Persons Commission and Edward Mark O'Connor, its Commissioner and world expert on refugees and human migration. McDonald's task was to screen refugees to prevent those who had criminal or espionage backgrounds from entering the United States. In the mid-1980s, Edward Mark O'Connor's son, Mark J. O'Connor, an attorney defending John Demjanjuk (1920–2012), invited McDonald to gather evidence in Poland pertaining to this complex case. McDonald agreed and, from 1986 to 1987, he served as principal investigator for the defense in the Demjanjuk case, traveling to Israel, Germany, and Poland.[1]

John Demjanjuk, a retired Ukrainian-born autoworker from Cleveland, allegedly exterminated thousands of Jews, while working at the Nazi concentration camp near Treblinka, Poland. His case exemplifies the most typical Soviet approach to active measures, and deserves a detailed analysis in light of recently discovered KGB documents. This case became the most successful KGB operation that complicated Ukrainian-Jewish relations in the West for generations and obscured the issue of human rights abuses in the Soviet Union. But before analyzing the case, as well as the failure of the U.S. state institutions to protect an innocent American citizen from

1 Jim McDonald, *John Demjanjuk: The Real Story* (Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1990). John Demjanjuk was represented by Buffalo lawyer Mark J. O'Connor, who served as his attorney from 1982 to 1987.
This is an expanded version of an article that appeared in *The International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*. See Olga Bertelsen, "Ukrainian and Jewish Émigrés as Targets of KGB Active Measures in the 1970s," *The International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 26 May 2020, https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2020.1750093 (accessed 22 June 2020).

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foreign covert action, it seems prudent to briefly discuss McDonald's findings that may serve as an introductory chapter to a much broader story about the Soviet covert operation code named "Vozmezdiie" (Retribution).

Demjanjuk was drafted into the Red Army in 1942. He was badly wounded in one of the first battles and hospitalized. After his recovery, he was sent back to the front. In the spring of 1942, he was taken prisoner in Crimea during the Battle of Kerch, and was transported as a POW to a transit camp at Rivne, Ukraine to be taken later to a large POW camp at Chełm in eastern Poland adjacent to the Soviet border. The Germans used him for forced labor, digging pits, repairing railroad tracks, and the like. He was incarcerated at Chełm for approximately eighteen months until the spring of 1944. A Holodomor survivor, Demjanjuk wanted to fight the Soviets, and the Germans sent him to Graz where he joined the Vlasov Army.[2] This element of Demjanjuk's biography ultimately made him ineligible to be working in any extermination camps. German documents specifically stipulated this exclusion to prevent information leaks about camp practices to the Soviets in case a *vlasovets* was taken prisoner by the Red Army.[3] Demjanjuk was placed in Camp Heuberg, a Vlasov training camp near Stuttgart, and even served for a brief period of time as a bodyguard for Vlasovite General Fiodor Trukhin who was under direct command of General Andrei Vlasov.

After 1945, Demjanjuk resided in several Displaced Persons (DP) camps at Danzig, Landshut, Regensburg, and Feldafing, and was even trained by the U.S. Army of Occupation, being hired as a truck driver. In a DP camp he met his future wife Vera Kowlowa,

2 McDonald, *John Demjanjuk*, 8–9. On the Vlasov Army, see Kirill Aleksandrov, *Russkiie soldaty Vermakhta: Geroi ili predateli: Sbornik statei i materialov*, 2nd ed. (Moskva: Yauza, 2005). The Vlasov Army or the Russian Liberation Army was a collaborationist army that was active from 1943 (non-officially) to 1945. Primarily Russian volunteers, they agreed to fight the Soviets under German command. A Red Army General captured on the Eastern Front and defected to Nazi Germany, Andrei Vlasov (1901–1946) led the army. By April 1945, there were approximately 50,000 soldiers serving in the Army.

3 McDonald, 9. *Vlasovtsy* refers to soldiers of the Vlasov Army.

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and in 1952 they, as a married couple, emigrated from West Germany to the United States. They settled in Cleveland, Ohio, and had three children. For nearly thirty years, Demjanjuk worked as an autoworker for the Ford Motor Company.[4]

The Demjanjuks' normal life ended abruptly in 1977, when on the basis of eyewitness testimonies by Holocaust survivors John was accused of having been a guard known as "Ivan the Terrible," being notoriously famous because of his violence and cruelty toward the prisoners at the Treblinka death camp. The court stripped Demjanjuk of his U.S. citizenship, and he was extradited to Israel in 1986 to stand trial. In 1988, he was convicted and received a death sentence, but in 1993 he was acquitted by the Israeli Supreme Court. In 1993, Demjanjuk was allowed to return to Ohio, but in 2002 his citizenship was revoked again and, in 2009, he was extradited to Germany where he was tried for being an accessory to the murder of 27,900 Jews at Sobibor. In 2011, the court convicted and sentenced Demjanjuk to five years in prison. He died on 17 March 2012 before the Court of Appeals delivered its final verdict. Ultimately, he died a free man, according to German law.

McDonald found three witnesses in Poland, the survivors of the atrocities at Treblinka. Immediately upon McDonald's arrival in Warsaw, the Israeli press published articles suggesting that he went to Poland to find "false witnesses" to defend Demjanjuk, offering them trips to the Unites States and money.[5] The most fascinating details of McDonald's trips to Warsaw and Treblinka are that the description of "Ivan the Terrible" as a giant did not coincide with the appearance of Ohio's Demjanjuk who was only six-feet tall, and that the Treblinka guard was nearly forty-years-old at the time of the Nazi occupation of Poland, "which would have been almost double that of the twenty-two-year-old John Demjanjuk."[6] Most importantly, two witnesses (the third one had passed away) who agreed to testify in the United States and in Israel and confirm the drastic discrepancy between the real Ivan the Terrible that they

4 Ibid., 10.
5 Ibid., 1.
6 Ibid., 4.

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knew and John Demjanjuk learned that their visas to the United States were "suddenly and mysteriously cancelled with no explanations" after they had been approved by the U.S. State Department.[7]

This study is an attempt to decipher the meaning of the Demjanjuk tragedy on the basis of newly discovered archival documents retrieved from the former KGB archives in Kharkiv and Kyiv, Ukraine. They shed light on how the KGB facilitated the creation of the U.S. Office of Special Investigation (hereafter: OSI) that played a crucial role in the Demjanjuk case, and reveal the anatomy of a KGB operation that produced an unexpected result—Demjanjuk's enduring show trial that transcended national and political boundaries. The importance of the recently discovered documents rest in their ability to contextualize and to better understand why Ivan Mykolaiovych Demjanjuk was denaturalized twice, extradited twice, and was put on trial four times in the United States, Israel, and Germany as an accessory to the murder of thousands of Jews. It reveals with absolute clarity that, designed in the early 1970s, the special KGB operation "Retribution" was a response to the human rights activism of "Ukrainian nationalists" and "Zionists" in North America. Some of them were former OUN members and members of other groups, such as the Vlasov Army that fought against the Soviets during the Second World War. Demjanjuk happened to be a member of both anti-Soviet groups, the OUN and the Vlasov Army. This operation helped the *chekists* eliminate their former and present enemies and opponents by proxy, through Western institutions.[8]

7 Ibid., 5.

8 The term *chekists* refers to those who worked for the Soviet secret police. The concept of retribution constituted the very foundation of KGB practices. Chekists fought against various anti-Soviet forces and agents, and thus there were several secret operations that are known under this code name (i.e., the assassination of Vilhelm Kube, a senior Nazi official in the occupying government in Belarus); see "Pravda i mify ob operatsii 'Vozmezdiie,'" *Belarus segodnia*, 24 September 2018, https://www.sb.by/articles/pravda-i-mify-ob-operatsii-vozmezdie2.html (accessed 22 June 2020); and the 17-day-operation in Afghanistan (May 1982) that helped eliminate arms and drugs facilities that belonged to the enemy formations, and kill 60 and arrest 80 fighters under Abdul Vakhob's command; see V. S. Novikov, "PV KGB SSSR v Afganistane: 1979–

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The Soviet Dissident and Western Human Rights Movements

During the 1960s–1970s, the Soviet government identified two major enemies in Ukraine and abroad—Ukrainian nationalists and Zionists. According to the KGB, both represented anti-communist and anti-Soviet forces.[9] The Ukrainian and Jewish diasporas in North America supported Soviet Ukrainians and Jews who resisted cooptation by the communist regime. As a result of the Western anti-Soviet human rights movement, close links developed between these two groups. In their documents, Soviet propagandists and the KGB labeled Soviet Ukrainians as nationalists, and Soviet Jews as "stateless cosmopolits" (*otshchepentsy*), Zionists, or "agents of imperialism." The Ukrainian and Jewish diasporas were cast as nationalists and imperialists, and these terms were used interchangeably for Soviet Ukrainians and Jews and their counterparts in the West. For decades, the Soviet secret police purged Ukrainian nationalists and separatists, and "'Zionist subversion' was one of the KGB's most enduring conspiracy theories."[10] Regardless of their geographic location, these two groups were targeted domestically through repressions and abroad through covert operations. In the late 1960s, when the KGB realized that a Western alliance between Jewish and Ukrainian human rights activists had begun to form, two Soviet campaigns against Ukrainians and Jews overlapped and transcended national borders. Every meeting of the Ukrainian diaspora activists in North America was interpreted as plotting and scheming against the USSR, and every protest and gathering of

1989," in *Krylia granitsy: Istoriko-dokumentalnyi ocherk* (Moskva: Granitsa, 2008), 455; also available at http://pv-afghan.narod.ru/Operatsii/Kufab-2_18-05-1982.htm (accessed 22 June 2020).

9 Sergei I. Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960–1985* (Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, MA: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; the John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 197; Taras Kuzio, "The Soviet Roots of Anti-Fascism and Anti-Semitism," *New Eastern Europe* 6, no. XXIV (2016): 93–100.

10 Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 222.

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Western Jews was suspected of being part of an international Zionist conspiracy against the Kremlin.[11]

Empirically and historically, nothing is unusual about these KGB constructs and charges of collusion between Ukrainians and Jews in Ukraine and abroad. Many Soviet Ukrainians and Jews held membership in Ukraine's dissident movement, and the most active portions of the Ukrainian and Jewish diaspora in North America together organized rallies and protests in support of the Jewish emigration movement, Jewish *refusniks*, and Ukrainian dissidents in Ukraine.[12] The brief period of relaxation during the Khrushchev Thaw inspired Ukraine's citizens to fight against Russification and for freedom of speech, expression, and movement, activities that challenged the very foundations of the Soviet system. Post-Stalinist state violence in Ukraine facilitated the ideological evolution of views for many people and shaped the fabric of the dissident movement that united human rights activists of various ethnicities. Inevitably, their links transcended national borders, involving the largest diaspora groups in North America, Ukrainians and Jews, sympathetic to the cause of their brethren in Ukraine and other Soviet republics.[13]

The Soviet dissident movement gained clear contours by the late 1960s, which prompted the Soviet government to design new tactics and strategies to neutralize it. Beyond KGB clandestine counter-measures aimed at isolating human rights activists domestically and thwarting their links abroad, the Soviet Communist Party establishment publicly labeled the diasporas' campaign as "aggressive American imperialism and rabid Zionism."[14] This rhetoric further

11 Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 232.

12 The term *refusniks* refers to those Soviet Jews whose requests to emigrate and visas were denied by the Soviet authorities.

13 See an enlightening study on the dissident movement in Ukraine, conducted by a research group at the CIA: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *Nationalism in Soviet Ukraine: Research Study*, August 1975 (Washington, D.C.: CIA Directorate of Intelligence, Office of Political Research, 1975), *Central Intelligence Agency Library*, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000981759.pdf (accessed 22 June 2020).

14 See Petro Shelest's speech (Communist Party chief in Ukraine) in *Radianska Ukraina*, 1 April 1971. Also quoted in Kenneth C. Farmer, *Ukrainian Nationalism*

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encouraged the rapprochement of the Ukrainian and Jewish diaspora, inviting them to overcome individual and collective stereotypes and hostilities toward each other and invest their efforts in liberating persecuted and prosecuted human rights activists in Ukraine. Importantly, shared activities and imprisonment of Soviet Ukrainians and Jews extended the space of their interactions, fueling and amplifying the anti-Soviet human rights movement in the West.

However, the sophistication of the Soviet propaganda machine and KGB active measures undermined the shared activities of human rights activists, exacerbating the anemic bonds and mutual grievances among the Ukrainian and Jewish diasporas in the West. The KGB campaigns were designed to discredit Ukrainians in the eyes of the Western Jewish community and vice versa, and to impede and potentially nullify the Western anti-Soviet human rights movement.

In the Soviet Union, the human rights movement involved activists of various ethnicities. Although the grievances of each ethnic community had their distinct character, all members of this movement advocated for the rule of law, free speech, the freedom of movement and emigration, and the right for their culture to exist and develop. Within this movement that by the early 1970s had become a pan-Soviet phenomenon, there were Ukrainians who protested against Russification, persecution, and imprisonment of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, and Jews, *refusnik* groups, and individuals who advocated the rights of Soviet Jewry to develop their culture or to emigrate to Israel. Both groups relied on internal and external resources for support, including diaspora organizations and Western governments, although various Soviet Jewish groups took advantage of the support of "'external' rather than 'internal' resources."[15]

The Soviet regime managed to keep the diaspora in the dark for quite some time about arrests of human rights activists and dis-

in the Post-Stalin Era: *Myth, Symbols and Ideology in Soviet Nationalities Policy* (The Hague, Boston, and London: Martinus Nijhoff Publisher, 1980), 203.

15 On the phenomenon of *refusniks*, see Vladimir (Ze'ev) Khanin, "The Refusenik Community in Moscow: Social Networks and Models of Identification," *East European Jewish Affairs* 41, nos. 1–2 (2011): 78.

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sidents. Persecution and arrests of the opposition were camouflaged by false accusations that portrayed Soviet dissidents as criminals or psychiatrically ill individuals.[16] Despite the fact that by 1963 in the United States, there were approximately 300 Ukrainian periodicals that enlightened their readers about the situation in Ukraine,[17] the first wave of Soviet repressions launched in 1964–1965 against the Ukrainian and Jewish intelligentsia received little international attention. Western outlets, such as *Voice of America*, *Radio Liberty*, *Vatican Radio*, and the *BBC*, began to cover the abuse of dissidents in the Soviet Union, including Ukraine, only in the late 1960s, although some degree of popular awareness of violations of human rights in the USSR can be traced to the beginning of the 1960s.[18] The informational breakthrough occurred during the second part of the 1960s when *samizdat* penetrated the Iron Curtain, and the United Nations and UNESCO were bombarded with letters of complaint authored by Ukrainian and Jewish émigrés and organizations.[19]

As a response to the imprisonment of human rights activists, many associations and defense committees were formed in Canada and the United States. They sprang from the political activism of the Ukrainian and Jewish diaspora who organized solidarity hunger strikes, appealing to the local press and elected officials for their help. In 1966, a charity movement on behalf of Soviet prisoners and their families emerged. Human rights activists donated money,

16 Olga Bertelsen, "Rethinking Psychiatric Terror against Nationalists in Ukraine," *Kyiv-Mohyla Arts and Humanities*, no. 1 (2014): 27–76.

17 Iu. S. Bukhtoiarova, *Obraz UPA u svitskii presi ukrainskoi diaspory SShA (1950–1980-ti rr.)* (unpublished master's thesis, Ukrainskyi katolytskyi universytet, Lviv, 2014, http://journalism.ucu.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Buhtoyarova1.pdf (accessed 22 June 2020).

18 Olena Zashko, *Pidtrymka uv'iaznenykh dysydentiv diasporoiu SShA (za materialamy vydan "Ameryka" ta "Svoboda"* (unpublished master's thesis, Ukrainskyi katolytskyi universytet, Lviv, 2017, http://kzref.org:81/poyasnyuvalena-zapiska-do-magistersekoyi-roboti-osvitneo-kvali.html (accessed 22 June 2020), 48–49; Christina Isajiw, *Negotiating Human Rights: In Defence of Dissidents during the Soviet Era* (Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 2014), xxiii.

19 On *samizdat* (self-publishing) see Heorhii Kasianov, *Nezhodni: Ukrainska intelihentsiia v rusi oporu 1960–80-kh rokiv* (Kyiv: Lybid, 1995).

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clothes, and food and by 1972, many unofficial charity funds were established for Russian, Ukrainian, and Jewish political prisoners.[20]

These committees also organized rallies and protests in support of political prisoners, and their participants were people of various ethnicities, including Ukrainians and Jews.[21] For instance, in November 1974, a diverse group of 80 people rallied at Burr Hall (Harvard University) to protest the fourteen-year incarceration of the Ukrainian dissident and historian Valentyn Moroz. He was arrested by the authorities twice, in 1965 and 1970, for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda," and the day of the rally was the 148th day of Moroz's voluntary hunger strike in the Vladimir Prison outside Moscow. The rally was organized by the Harvard chapter of the Committee for the Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners, and speakers at the rally urged supporters to appeal to the U.S. Congress to obtain its support for Moroz.[22] Some committees were named after dissidents and victims of Soviet terror. For instance, a branch of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America (UNWLA) in Los Angeles was named after Alla Horska, a Ukrainian artist and dissident who in 1970 was violently murdered, likely by the KGB, for her dissident activities. By the late 1970s, many grassroots groups founded in the middle of the 1970s were transformed into fully functioning associations, such as Americans in Defense of Human Rights in Ukraine led by Ihor Olshanivskyi. Its chapters were established in many Canadian and American cities.

The base for support of human rights activities in the West was substantial. Individual and collective memories and experiences of displacement and terror to which people were subjected in the Soviet Union inspired their political activism. The third wave of forced migration from Ukraine occurred during World War II,

20 For a discussion about the charity movement, see Barbara Walker, "Pollution and Purification in the Moscow Human Rights Networks of the 1960s and 1970s," *Slavic Review* 68, no. 2 (2009): 376–95.

21 Zashko, "Pidtrymka uviaznenykh dysydentiv," 32.

22 Monique L. Burns, "Committee Rallies to Support Soviet Dissident Writer Moroz," *The Harvard Crimson*, 26 November 1974, http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1974/11/26/committee-rallies-to-support-soviet-dissident/ (accessed 22 June 2020).

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when approximately 4.2 million people were transported to Western Europe. At the end of the war the majority of the survivors returned to Ukraine. Yet, approximately 310,000 remained in Western Europe, 240,000 of whom later migrated to the United States and Canada, 35,000 to 40,000—to Argentina and Brazil, and 30,000—to Australia. In the 1970s–1980s, 30,000 Ukrainians found themselves in Canada, and 100,000—in the United States. Well-educated people, they occupied the leading positions in various diaspora organizations, and significantly advanced their infrastructure, moving the center of the Ukrainian diaspora activities from Europe to North America.[23] Between 1970 and 1980, approximately 250,000 Soviet citizens emigrated on Israeli visas.[24] Many of those Soviet nationally conscious emigrants joined the anti-Soviet human rights movement.

Jewish-Ukrainian cooperation in North America was built on extant personal and institutional connections established during the post-war decades in the United States and Canada. For instance, in the early 1950s, a commission of Jewish-Ukrainian affairs was formed at the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Science in New York, and the Association to Perpetuate the Memory of Ukrainian Jews and the Support Committee for Ukrainian Jews were founded in New York under the leadership of Mendel Osherovych, a Jewish writer, translator, historian, and the author of the three-volume publication *Jews in Ukraine* (1961).[25] Personal links and friendships

23 Bukhtoiarova, "Obraz UPA." For more details about forced deportations and transfers during the Second World War, see Danylo Husar Struk, ed., *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. III (Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Inc., 1993), 401–04. Within the *Ostarbeiter* program, between 1943 and 1945, 2.8 million civilians were deported to work in Germany. Among them nearly 2.3 million were from Ukraine. See Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 634.

24 By 1980, however, the Soviet government placed restrictions on Jewish emigration, and in 1981 approximately 40,000 Jews were denied visas. See Volodymyr Kubijovyc, ed., "Jews," in *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. II (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 390.

25 Kubijovyc, "Jews;" Vasyl Markus and Dariia Markus, eds., "Osherovych Mendel," in *Entsyklopediia Ukrainskoi diaspory: Spolucheni Shtaty Ameryky*, vol. 1, kn. 2 (New York and Chicago: Naukove Tovarystvo im. Shevchenka v Amerytsi, 2012), 222. On Osherowitch's experiences in Soviet Ukraine and Russia, see Mendel Osherowitch, *How People Live in Soviet Russia: Impressions from a Journey*,

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among Ukrainian and Jewish families, members of these associations, survived through generations, serving as a social bond for their political activities in the 1970s. The Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, especially those who were leaders of various Ukrainian diaspora organizations and communities, took an active part in the human rights movement, protesting against the incarceration of intellectuals in Ukraine under Shelest and Brezhnev.[26] The diaspora tried to influence societal and political developments in Ukraine through several channels—economic, informational, and cultural. However, because the USSR and its authoritarian governing and policymaking was less susceptible to diasporic influence than that of more democratic regimes, the Ukrainian diaspora sought support from other ethnic interest groups, including the Jewish diaspora community, and relied on its financial resources locally to promote the anti-Soviet human rights grassroots movement, exerting direct and indirect influence through donations to various civil society projects and lobbying state officials.[27]

The Ukrainian and Jewish diasporas encouraged and supported students' human rights initiatives, from rallies to street protests in front of Soviet embassies. Those students who struggled for Soviet Jewry's rights engendered local "action" committees in half a dozen cities in the United States. These activities served as the foundation for establishing an umbrella organization in 1970—the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (UCSJ). In the 1970s, the Union functioned as the principal grassroots organization that facilitated the effectiveness of the Soviet Jewry Movement. The Union offered moral and financial support for the movement, and its objectives included assistance to Soviet political prisoners and working toward their eventual release from Soviet labor camps and emigration from the USSR. Many other ethnic grassroots groups and NGOs

ed. Lubomyr Y. Luciuk, trans. Sharon Power (Kingston, Canada: Kashtan Press, 2020).

26 On various groups of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, see Denis Horelov, "Vplyv orhanizatsii ukrainskoi diaspory na rozvytok hromadianskoho suspilstva v Ukraini," *Stratehichni priorytety*, no. 3 (20) (2011): 36.

27 On how diasporas operate, see Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 57, no. 3 (2003): 449–79.

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participated in the activities of the UCSJ. They shared general strategies and methods of influence on the Soviet government in human rights matters. Individual contacts among the members of the UCSJ and organizations, such as the Human Rights Commission (HRC) of the World Congress of Free Ukrainians (WCFU), were preserved until the very collapse of the Soviet Union, strengthening Western commitment to human rights that led to revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe at the end of the twentieth century.[28]

Samizdat and communication among imprisoned Ukrainian and Jewish dissidents extended a space for a dialogue between the two ethnic diaspora groups. Importantly, for the first time since the attempts at a Ukrainian-Jewish dialogue that were curtailed by the Bolsheviks in the post-revolutionary decade,[29] this space became truly transnational, inviting the Ukrainian and Jewish diaspora communities to participate in the movement against injustice and terror in the Soviet Union. Individuals such as Iosyf Zisels (b. 1946), Nadiia Svitlychna (1936–2006), Ivan Svitlychnyi (1929–1992), Semen Gluzman (b. 1946), Vasyl Stus (1938–1985), Arie Vudka (b. 1947), and Yevhen Sverstiuk (1927–2014) created a new intellectual, cultural, and humane context for Ukrainian and Jewish émigrés, in which the sense of Ukraine, liberated from Moscow's ideological constraints and subversion, cultivated notions such as freedom, mutual respect, and compassion.

These interactions and human rights movements in the USSR and the West provoked serious concerns among Soviet Communist Party leaders. They took urgent measures to prevent the "spread of global Zionism," and to conceal the truth about state violence, targeting dissidents and nationalists throughout the Soviet Union.[30] Most importantly, Western alliances that supported Ukraine's dissidents were to be compromised and broken.

28 Isajiw, *Negotiating Human Rights*, 294–95, 320–22.

29 On the Jewish-Ukrainian dialogue in the twentieth century's second decade, see Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Myroslav Shkandrij, *Jews in Ukrainian Literature: Representation and Identity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 92–106.

30 Anatoliy Kruglashov, "Chernivtsi: A City with a Mysterious Flavor of Tolerance," Eurolimes, no.19 (2015): 151–52.

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The KGB and the OSI against Demjanjuk

Zionism, Ukrainian nationalism, and Ukrainian-Jewish human rights initiatives in North America were secondary only to the main target for KGB active measures—the United States or "the Main Adversary."[31] In the late 1960s, the Ukrainian-Jewish interactions, both in Ukraine and abroad, were identified by the KGB as the "collaboration of Zionism and Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism," and special sectors and departments were created to investigate and to undermine this collaboration.[32] Several departments were established within the Fifth Directorate of the KGB whose tasks were to discredit Ukrainian émigrés in the eyes of the Jewish diaspora, Jewish NGOs, and Israel, blemishing the Ukrainians' reputations by facts mixed with half-truths, disinformation, forgeries, and false testimonies.[33] Western Jewish diaspora groups and associations were also subjected to scrutiny, falling under the collective KGB term of "intelligence centers of imperialist states," agents that undermined the image and reputation of the Soviet Union.[34]

From 1960, forged documents became an inseparable part of Soviet covert activities, designed to discredit the opponents of the Soviet regime. Most were produced by a disinformation section known as Department D, established in 1959.[35] A KGB veteran,

31 Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 237.

32 Myron B. Kuropas, *Ukrainian-American Citadel: The First One Hundred Years of the Ukrainian National Association* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1996), 574.

33 On forgeries and disinformation, see Richard H. Shultz and Roy Godson, *Dezinformatsia: The Strategy of Soviet Disinformation* (New York: Berkley Books, 1986), 148–57.

34 Anatolii Belov and Andrei Shilkin, *Diversii bez dinamita* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1972).

35 Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of Its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 463; Michael F. Scholl, "Active Measures and Disinformation as Part of East Germany's Propaganda War, 1953–1972," in *East German Foreign Intelligence: Myth, Reality and Controversy*, eds. Kristie Macrakis, Thomas Wegener Friis, and Helmut Müller-Enbergs (London: Routledge, 2010), 114–15; James Loeffler, *Rooted Cosmopolitans: Jews and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2018), 238–39.

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General Ivan Agayants was appointed to head the department. Forgeries were the most popular method employed by the KGB. Several decades ago, the international intelligence community and scholars suggested that information that had emanated from the Soviet Union and was offered to the American government should not be taken at face value, as it was concocted by the KGB. Yet, as this study will further demonstrate, this recommendation was disregarded by the American government.

The KGB considered the task of compromising Ukrainians and Jews in each other's eyes feasible because the foundations for mutual hostilities were established centuries ago and were exacerbated at the beginning of the twentieth century and especially during the Second World War.[36] Stalin's terror against Ukrainians during the interwar period and his latent pre-war antisemitism incited popular antisemitism among Ukrainians that was amplified by German propaganda in occupied Ukraine, calling to "avenge the wrongs done them by the 'Judeo-Bolsheviks.'"[37] The participation of Ukrainian radical nationalist groups in the Holocaust inculcated anti-Ukrainian attitudes among Jews. As a result, Ukrainian-Jewish

36 Joshua Shanes and Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "An Unlikely Alliance: The 1907 Ukrainian-Jewish Electoral Coalition," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 3 (2009): 483–505; Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1919–1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002); John-Paul Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crow," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53, nos. 2–4 (2011): 209–43; John-Paul Himka, "Interventions: Challenging the Myths of Twentieth-Century Ukrainian History," in *Convolutions of Historical Politics*, eds. Alexei Miller and Maria Lipman (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012), 211–38; John-Paul Himka, "Ukrainian Memories of the Holocaust: The Destruction of Jews as Reflected in Memoirs Collected in 1947," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 54, nos. 3–4 (2012): 427–42.

37 Elissa Bemporad, "The Blood Libel and Its Wartime Permutations: Cannibalism in Soviet Lviv," in *Ritual Murder in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Beyond: New Histories of an Old Accusation*, eds. Ugene M. Avrutin, Jonathan Dekel-Chen, and Robert Weinberg (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017), 219–37; Alexander V. Prusin, "A 'Zone of Violence': The Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Eastern Galicia in 1914–1915 and 1941," in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, eds. Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 371; Peter Klein, ed., *Die Einsatzgruppen in der besetzten Sowjetunion, 1941/42: Die Tätigkeitsund Lageberichte des Chefs der Scicherheitspolizei und des SD* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1997), 319.

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relations in the West have been difficult and were aggravated by KGB active measures and several developments in the 1970s and 1980s, including the sensational cases of Dr. Mikhail Stern, a Ukrainian Jew and Soviet political prisoner, and Demjanjuk who allegedly exterminated thousands of Jews at the Nazi concentration camp near Treblinka, Poland.[38]

The OSI (Office of Special Investigations) in the United States was another powerful actor that undermined the efforts of those Ukrainians and Jews who were willing to work together to help Soviet dissidents.[39] In the middle of the 1960s, a special working group was established within the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service whose objective was to identify war criminals who committed crimes against humanity by collaborating with the Nazis, and who illegally resided in the United States. In 1977, the U.S. Congress established the OSI under the umbrella of the U.S. Department of Justice, whose officials investigated individual cases of Nazi war criminals, bringing them to justice. Remarkably, in its reports, the KGB

38 Officially, Stern was sentenced to prison for receiving bribes from his patients, yet the underlying reason for his trial and his subsequent imprisonment was his refusal to discourage his sons from emigrating to Israel. After his release and emigration to the West, Stern, also a supporter of Ukrainian national aspirations, was warmly welcomed by the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States but was shunned by American Jews. According to various sources, there were a number of reasons for this pattern. First, the Israeli government was frustrated that after doing everything possible to release Stern, he went to the United States instead of Israel. Second, in view of the influential Western Jewish diaspora, Stern's close association with the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States could jeopardize Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union. Third, expressing his gratitude to Ukrainians who refused to testify against him and arguing that "the Ukrainian people are not anti-Semitic people," Stern provoked a protest among American Jews, the majority of whom were firm believers in the narrative that espoused intrinsic Ukrainian antisemitism. For the transcript of the tape recording of the Soviet trial against Shtern, see August Stern, ed., *The USSR vs. Dr. Mikhail Stern: The Only Tape Recording of a Trial Smuggled Out of the Soviet Union*, trans. Marko Carynnyk (New York: Urizen Books, 1977); see also Kuropas, *Ukrainian-American Citadel*, 575.

39 Kevin C. Ruffner, "From the End of the Cold War to the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act (U)," in *Draft Working Paper: Nazi War Crimes Research Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2004 [declassified]), 125–41, esp. "OSI Prosecutions in the 1990s: The Demjanjuk Debacle," 128–31, *CIA Library*, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/NAZI%20WAR%20CRIMES%20RESEARCH%20REPORT%20%20%28K.%20RUFFNER%29_0007.pdf (accessed 22 June 2020).

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illuminated its crucial role in the emergence of the OSI, which was attributed to the pressure imposed on the U.S. government by Soviet active measures and counterintelligence operations.[40]

The major criticism of the OSI's broad prerogatives included the claim that the OSI relied heavily on evidence provided by the Soviets. Many of them were forgeries, like in Demjanjuk's case launched by the Department of Justice in 1977.[41] As one critic has aptly stated, "in the late 70s and early 80s, these men [in the OSI] were spoon-fed by the KGB, selected tidbits that John Demjanjuk was a death-camp guard."[42] Today, numerous articles and books have been published about the OSI's activities, but no case has besmirched its prestige more than its prosecution of Demjanjuk. As a CIA historian has noted, "while OSI filed its largest number of suits in 1992, the Demjanjuk case cast a dark shadow over the entire Nazi war criminal investigations."[43] Despite its noble mission, the OSI played an oblique but nevertheless a key role in helping the KGB undermine the cooperation between the Ukrainian and Jewish diasporas.

The history of the Demjanjuk affair can be traced to the events that occurred in the mid-1970s in the Soviet Union, rather than in the United States, when Elizabeth Holtzman, the originator of the Holtzman Amendment, had gone to the Soviet Union to discuss two basic issues:[44] first, how to make Soviet Jews' immigration to the United States freer, and second, to initiate collaboration with

40 Haluzevyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Sluzhby Bezpeky Ukrainy (hereafter: HDA SBU), f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1230, ark. 169.

41 For more details on Demjanjuk's case, see Yoram Sheftel, *The Demjanjuk Affair: The Rise and Fall of a Show-Trial*, revised ed. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1994).

42 HDA SBU, f. 68, op. 1, spr. 3, tom 2, ark. 10.

43 Ruffner, "From the End of the Cold War to the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act (U)," 128.

44 For an enlightening study focusing on the Holtzman Amendment, see Daniel E. Ross, *Waffen SS: Friend or Foe? "The 1978 Holtzman Amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act"* (unpublished individual study project, Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 9 May 1989 [unclassified]), available at https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a209531.pdf (accessed 21 March 2020). See also Nigel Jackson, "John Demjanjuk: The Man More Sinned Against," *Inconvenient History* 4, no. 2 (2012), posted on the website of the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH), Mill Valley, CA, 1 July 2012, https://codoh.com/library/document/3177/?lang=en (accessed 23 June 2020).

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the KGB on bringing accused war criminals, former Soviet citizens, to justice. In 1977, she secured passage of a law, known as the Holtzman Amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act. This amendment provided additional grounds for deportation of individuals who collaborated with the Nazi government, and limited their ability to obtain exclusion and deportation relief. Congress added an appendage, establishing the OSI with an annual budget of $3 million. Its task included identifying Nazis and deporting or extraditing them to the USSR or Israel.[45] The same year, Michael Hanusiak, an editor of the pro-Soviet Western Ukrainian newspaper *News from Ukraine* (which was a KGB front) and head of the American Communist Party, had traveled to the Soviet Union and, collaborating with the KGB, obtained a list of suspects which he brought to the United States upon his return. One of the names on that list was Ivan Demjanjuk.[46] Why?

In his book *John Demjanjuk: The Real Story*, McDonald shared with his readers an interesting piece of information that has not been mentioned in any other narratives that portrayed Demjanjuk as evil lying under oath. McDonald has detailed a story told by Attorney O'Connor who frequently visited the Demjanjuk family in Cleveland:

> Vera's first visit to Ukraine [Demjanjiuk's wife] was to John's mother who was shocked to discover that her son was still alive, as she had been collecting a mother's veteran pension for all these years. After Vera left, the delighted old lady went to the KGB and joyously told them, "You don't have to pay me a pension anymore; my boy is alive and living in Cleveland, Ohio." On hearing this incredible admission, the KGB immediately invaded her house and confiscated all photographs and documents pertaining to John. The machinery of a police state began to operate.[47]

In September 1977, *News from Ukraine* published an article which triggered Demjanjuk's saga. The article labeled him a "traitor to the Motherland" because he surrendered to the Germans instead of killing himself. In swift manner, the OSI "transmogrified" Demjanjuk from a traitor, in Soviet terms, into a notoriously cruel

45 McDonald, 13.

46 Jackson, "John Demjanjuk." *News from Ukraine* was an English-language Communist newspaper published in New York City.

47 McDonald, 14.

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Nazi guard known as "Ivan the Terrible," operating gas chambers in Treblinka and exterminating thousands of Jews.[48] The OSI director Allan Ryan insisted that Demjanjuk was to be prosecuted as Ivan the Terrible despite the fact that one of the OSI prosecutors at the time, George Parker, warned his colleagues against it for ethical reasons, because the evidence was contradictory, placing Demjanjuk in two different places at the same time—Treblinka and Sobibor.[49] Yet, according to Parker's testimony, the OSI, being pressed by a former member of Congress Joshua Eilberg of Pennsylvania, dismissed Parker's reservations.[50] Eilberg had written to Griffin Bell, the Attorney-General at the time, stating that the Department of Justice "could not afford to lose" this case. Demjanjuk was to represent the evil symbol of the Holocaust at a show trial.[51] Demjanjuk's defense attorneys lost the case: he was stripped of his American citizenship and in February 1986 extradited to Israel to stand trial as a Nazi war criminal.

An Israeli court determined that Demjanjuk had participated in war crimes and sentenced him to death. However, five years later, the Israeli Supreme Court acquitted him after it heard evidence indicating that he was a victim of mistaken identity. He returned to the United States to be sued again by the OSI, this time as an SS guard at several concentration camps. Once again, he was stripped of his American citizenship, and in May 2009 he was deported to Germany to stand trial in Munich at the age of 89. Demjanjuk passed away at the age of 91 at a nursing home in Bad Feilnbach, Germany on 17 March 2012. On 12 May 2011, he was

48 Ibid., 15.

49 Eric Lichtblau, *The Nazi Next Door: How America Became a Safe Haven for Hitler's Men* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 203.

50 Joshua Eilberg (1921–2004) was a Jewish American politician and member of the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1978, Eilberg was investigated for money he received pertaining to a federal grant to Hahnemann University Hospital. He lost his re-election in 1978, and, three months later, pleaded guilty to charges of conflict of interest. He was sentenced to five years of probation and a $10,000 fine. See "Joshua Eilberg," *Jewish Virtual Library: A Project of AICE – American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise*, 2020, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/joshua-eilberg (accessed 23 June 2020).

51 Quoted in Jackson, "John Demjanjuk."

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convicted as an accessory to the murder of 27,900 Jews and sentenced to five years in prison. Yet his conviction was invalidated because the German Appellate Court had no opportunity to try an appeal or to make any decision before Demjanjuk's death. According to German law, Demjanjuk remains legally innocent.

The details of Demjanjuk's thirty-five-year legal battle are offered in numerous publications, but only a few have examined its origin and the OSI's role in it. The OSI's motivations for concealing the evidence that would have helped Demjanjuk's defense still await close scrutiny. The role of American intelligence agencies that were aware of the fraudulent nature of the main evidence in the case, Demjanjuk's Trawniki ID card, is not completely clear. While Demjanjuk was still alive, the United States Court of Appeals ruled that his prosecution was a fraud and that federal prosecutors acted with an absolute disregard for the truth.[52] Withholding the documents that confirmed that Demjanjuk was a victim of mistaken identity, evidence that the OSI had since the late 1970s, and heavily relying on the KGB forgery, the OSI compromised its reputation at a very early stage. Yet, some still publish books and give talks that avoid thorough analyses of the OSI's wrongdoings in this case, portraying Demjanjuk as a war criminal without any credible evidence.[53] Importantly, these narratives are void of any attempts at answering the question about the Soviets' reasons behind framing Demjanjuk as a Nazi accomplice.

KGB archival documents help establish a logical connection among the most crucial developments during the Cold War—the agreement about cooperation between American and Soviet officials in the Nazi hunt, the Western anti-Soviet human rights movement, and political instability in the USSR. In the KGB's view, this instability was inspired by the former members of the OUN, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, who managed to survive Soviet and Nazi regimes by escaping to the West. According to the

52 Jackson, "John Demjanjuk."

53 Lawrence Douglas, *The Right Wrong Man: John Demjanjuk and the Last Great Nazi War Crimes Trial* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016); see Lawrence Douglas's talk at Amherst College, *YouTube*, 3 June 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKUUrzacUe8&t=1164s (accessed 27 June 2020).

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KGB, they became quite visible and active in North America, creating unions, associations, and groups that continued to fight the Soviets and protest against a new wave of repressions of intellectuals in Ukraine.[54] To neutralize their activities in North America, the KGB designed several special operations that targeted the "reactionary political circles and Western secret services." In their reports to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the KGB leadership informed their party bosses that in their anti-Soviet operations of ideological subversion, Western intelligence services used the "'gang leaders' [*glavari*] of Western OUNs" and Ukrainian nationalists of "all shades." The KGB covert operations would kill two birds with one stone—eliminate the long-lasting enemies of the Soviet regime, former members of the OUN who could be easily framed as Nazi collaborators, and use the powerful Jewish circles who would complete this task for the Soviets. As a result, cooperation between Ukrainian and Jewish communities and their shared human rights activities would be curtailed.

According to Demjanjuk's son-in-law Edward Nishnic, Demjanjuk was a member of the OUN.[55] Moreover, as mentioned earlier, for a brief period of time Demjanjuk was also part of the Vlasov Army, a collaborationist formation that fought against the Soviets under German command, which made him doubly guilty in the eyes of the Soviets. In addition, the KGB learned from Demjanjuk's mother that he was still alive residing in the United States. The discovered KGB documents fully confirm a supposition

54 According to a participant of the Committee in Defense of Political Prisoners and Amnesty International (private correspondence on 31 May 2020), the OUN(B) in North America was a highly infiltrated organization and was, to a significant degree, manipulated by KGB operatives. Its authoritarian structure and ideology prevented the OUN from becoming part of the mainstream human rights movement in the West. According to this person, "human rights for the OUN(B) was a tactical concession to the contemporary moment." The KGB hardly ascertained the diaspora dynamics and affiliations. Ukrainians were gathered under the umbrella term "Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists," and Jews were labeled "Zionists" or "imperialists."

55 Correspondence with Edward Nishnic, 22 April 2019, FB. For more on Demjanjuk's biography, see Hans Peter Rullmann, *Der Fall Demjanjuk. Unschuldiger oder Massenmörder?* (Viöl: Verlag für ganzheitliche Forschung und Kultur, 1987).

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of Demjanjuk's Israeli lawyer Yoram Sheftel about Demjanjuk's innocence and the Soviets' motivations for targeting Demjanjuk. Nearly a quarter of a century ago, through intuition, logic, and evidence, Sheftel insisted that the Soviet objective was to cause a rift between the Jewish and the Ukrainian diasporas, and to eliminate the old enemies of the Soviet state.[56] People like Michael Hanusiak and the leaders of the Jewish organizations in the West were used as tools of manipulation that would help the KGB to "nip the Jewish-Ukrainian 'conspiracy' in the bud."[57]

The KGB Operation "Retribution"

The discovery of a very important document among other KGB operational materials preserved in the former KGB archive in Kyiv invites us to revisit the Demjanjuk case. The code name of the KGB operation, "Retribution," is telling, accurately highlighting its essential goal and tasks. The Demjanjuk affair neatly dovetails with the objectives of the Soviet secret campaign launched to break the coalition of Ukrainian and Jewish émigrés by perpetuating the image of Ukrainians as organic antisemites and war criminals. Yet, the desire for revenge and retaliation against OUN members, who fought against Soviet communists for decades, seems to have prevailed. The language of KGB reports to the Central Committee is quite instructive, revealing the hostile attitudes of the KGB leadership toward former OUN members residing in the West. Nearly every report emanating from the KGB headquarters in the 1960s and 1970s closely discussed their activities. This fixation on Ukrainian nationalists inspired the KGB to move against the logic of the Cold War at its height and to express eagerness to work with American officials, providing evidence of Ukrainian immigrants' war crimes.

56 "Newshound Yoram Sheftel Interview Part One," *YouTube*, 30 November 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxIoGqfXGyI; and "The Man Who Represented Ivan Demjanjuk," *YouTube*, 20 November 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G72ecY5hjxs (accessed 24 June 2020).

57 Yoram Sheftel, *Defending "Ivan the Terrible": The Conspiracy to Convict John Demjanjuk* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1996), ix, x.

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The birth of two Demjanjuks (Ivan Mykolaiovych and Ivan Andriiovych) in the village of Dubovi Makharyntsi (Vinnytsia oblast) complicated the KGB's task. In 1971, after learning from a relative that the KGB visited his home looking for him, Ivan Andriiovych, an apparently real Trawniki man, committed suicide.[58] When the KGB decided to forge the Trawniki card that allegedly belonged to Ivan Mykolaiovych Demjanjuk, a U.S. citizen residing in Cleveland, the KGB paid another visit to Ivan Andriiovych's home in Dubovi Makharyntsi to make sure that no written documents or photos were left behind. Having no valid documents that would prove Ivan Mykolaiovych Demjanjuk's crimes against humanity and his collaboration with the Nazis, the KGB forged his Trawniki ID card, an occurrence that has been established beyond a reasonable doubt by numerous probes, including those carried out by the head of the Federal Criminal Police Office of Germany (BKA) Dr. Louis Ferdinand Werner, German document expert Dieter Lehner, and the German Jewish independent news magazines *SemitTimes* and *Der Spiegel*.[59]

58 Natalia A. Fedushchak, "Case of Mistaken Identity?" *Kyiv Post*, 2 June 2011, https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/case-of-mistaken-identity-105923.html (accessed 24 June 2020).

59 HDA SBU, f. 68, op. 1, spr. 3, tom 1, ark. 1–18 zv.; HDA SBU, f. 68, op. 1, spr. 3, tom 2, ark. 1–19. For a detailed analysis of the Soviet forgery, see "John Demjanjuk: Mistrial of the Century" (Disinformation Gallery), *Ukrainian Archive*, 2020, https://willzuzak.ca/lp/demlinks.html (accessed 24 June 2020).

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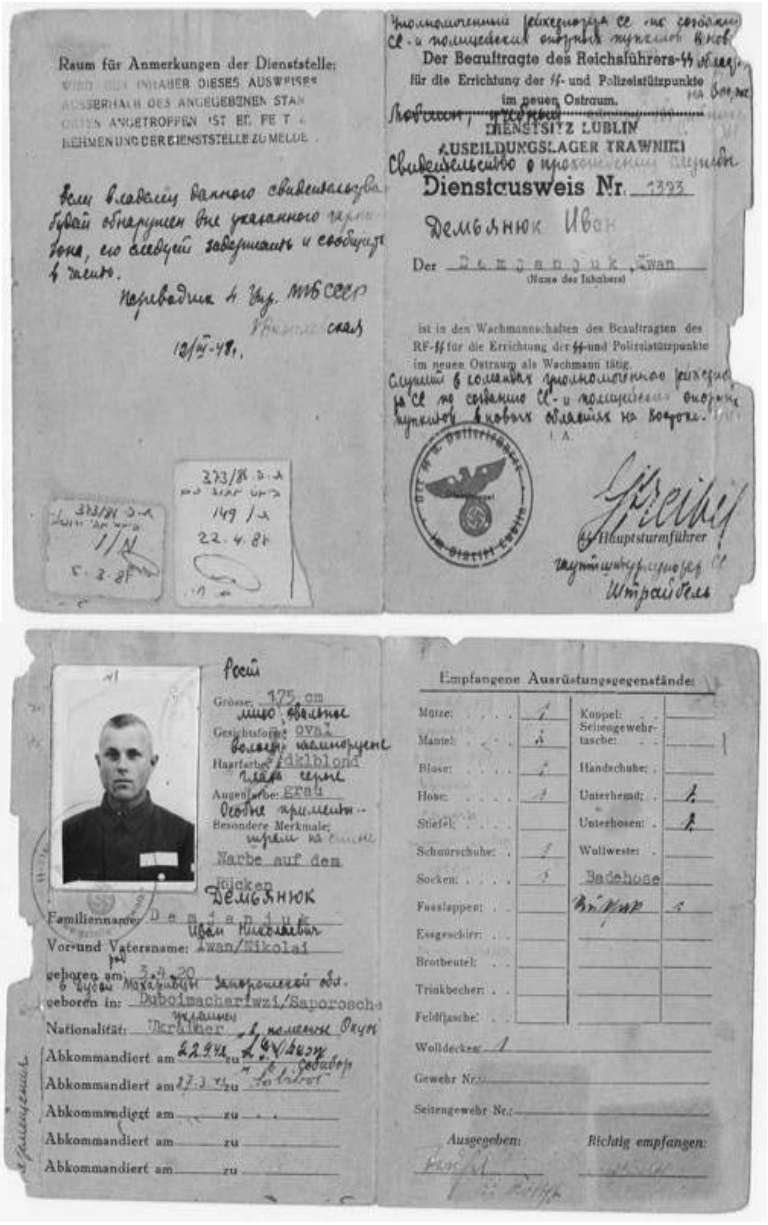
The Soviet Forgery: Demjanjuk's Trawniki Card.



Raum für Anmerkungen der Dienststelle:

Der Beauftragte des Reichsführers-SS

für die Errichtung der SS- und Polizeistützpunkte im neuen Ostraum.

DIENSTSITZ LUBLIN

AUSBILDUNGSLAGER TRAWNIKI

Dienstausweis Nr. 1393

Демьянюк Иван

Der Demjanjuk, Iwan

(Name des Inhabers)

ist in den Wachmannschaften des Beauftragten des RF-SS für die Errichtung der SS- und Polizeistützpunkte im neuen Ostraum als Wachmann tätig.

Hauptsturmführer

Courtesy of the Ukrainian Archive.
https://willzuzak.ca/lp/dersho09.html.

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The original of this forgery is located in one of the archives in the Russian Federation. In Israel, when it became clear that the story about Demjanjuk of Treblinka was not valid, the prosecution replaced it with the story about Demjanjuk of Sobibor who allegedly participated in mass killings of Jews as an SS guard. Had he received his initial training in Trawniki and been a guard at Sobibor, Demjanjuk must have had a *Personalbogen* on file there (below please see a sample of valid *Personalbogen* which is a German personnel and Trawniki identity record that includes, among other things, a thumb print for Ivan Ivchenko, a guard at Sobibor). Yet, this document had never been produced by the KGB. Doctoring this document was impossible for a simple reason: just anyone's thumb print would unequivocally reveal the forgery.

There is no doubt that information about Nazi collaborators and the lists of Ukrainians who participated in the Holocaust offered by the KGB to American and Canadian authorities included both, those individuals who committed crimes against humanity and those who did not. OUN members, however, who had become visible to the Soviet secret police due to their political activism in the West, inevitably found their way into these lists. During and after the war, the KGB actively searched for true Nazi collaborators, located them, and brought them to justice. From a moral point of view, this was a noble goal and retribution for terrible atrocities. Among those people were, for instance, Ignat Danilchenko and Ivan Ivchenko, whose criminal files are available for scrutiny in the former KGB archives in Ukraine.[60] Yet, punishment of war criminals, returnees to the Soviet Union, was not part of operation "Retribution." Rather it was designed as a covert operation, targeting Western OUN members and human rights activists.

60 See, for instance, Ignat Danilchenko's criminal file in HDA SBU, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 67827; and Ivan Ivchenko's criminal file in Kharkiv SBU archive, spr. 21728, vol. 1–2.

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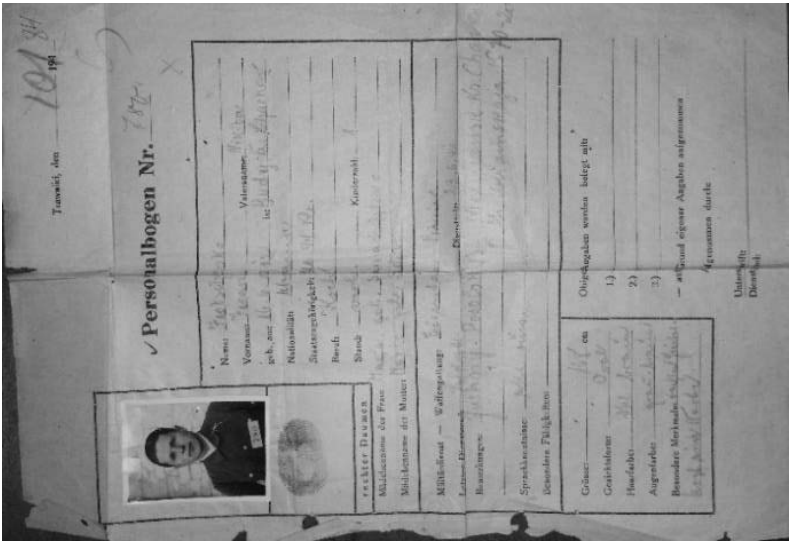
Ivan Ivchenko's valid personal card (*Personalbogen*) at the Trawniki camp.



Courtesy of the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine, Kharkiv, Ukraine, KhHDA SBU, spr. 21728, vol. 1–2.

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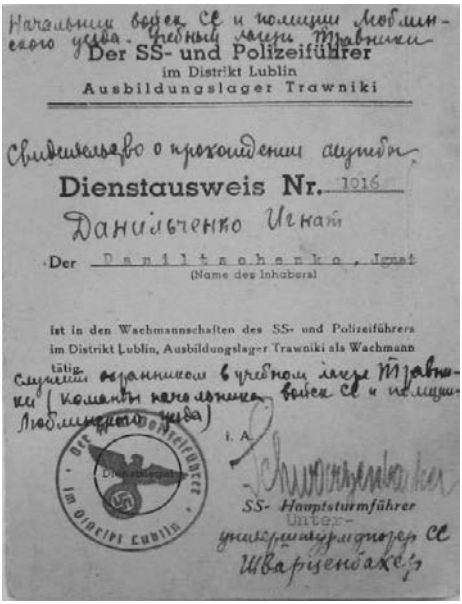
Ignat Danilchenko's ID at the Trawniki camp.



Начальник войск СС и полиции Люблинского уезда. Учебный лагерь Травники

Der SS- und Polizeiführer
im Distrikt Lublin
Ausbildungslager Trawniki

Свидетельство о прохождении ацтебы

Dienstausweis Nr. 1016

Данильченко Игнат

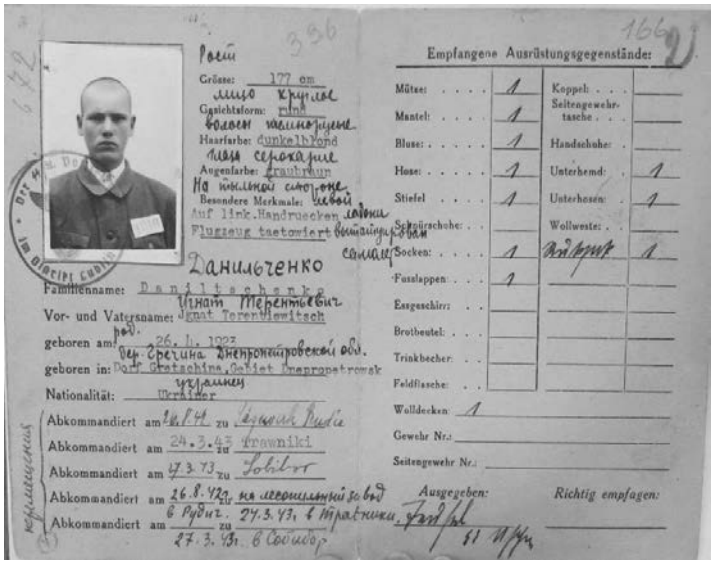
Der Daniltschenko, Ignat
(Name des Inhabers)

ist in den Wachmannschaften des SS- und Polizeiführers im Distrikt Lublin, Ausbildungslager Trawniki als Wachmann tätig.

Служит охранником в учебном лагере Травники (команды начальника войск СС и полиции Люблинского уезда)

i. A.

SS- Hauptsturmführer
Unter-
унтер-штурмфюрер СС
Шварценбахер



Рост 336

Grösse: 177 cm
лицо круглое
Gesichtsform: rund
волосы темнорусые
Haarfarbe: dunkelblond
глаза серокарие
Augenfarbe: graubraun
На тыльной стороне
Besondere Merkmale: левой
Auf link. Handruecken лапы
Flugzeug taetowiert вытатуирован самолет

Данильченко
Familienname: Daniltschenko
Vor- und Vatersname: Ignat Terentiewitsch
Игнат Терентьевич
geboren am: 26. 4. 1923
род. Дер. Гречина Днепропетровской обл.
geboren in: Dorf Gretschina, Gebiet Dnepropetrowsk
украинец
Nationalität: Ukrainer

Abkommandiert am 26.8.44 zu Legnowa Rudia
Abkommandiert am 24.3.43 zu Trawniki
Abkommandiert am 27.3.43 zu Sobibor
Abkommandiert am 26.8.42 zu на лесопильный завод в Рудиц
Abkommandiert am 27.3.43 zu 24.3.43 в Травники, в Собибор

Empfangene Ausrüstungsgegenstände: 166

Mütze:	1	Koppel:	
Mantel:	1	Seitengewehrtasche:	
Bluse:	1	Handschuhe:	
Hose:	1	Unterhemd:	1
Stiefel	1	Unterhosen:	1
Schnürschuhe:		Wollweste:	
Socken:	1		1
Fusslappen:	1		
Essgeschirr:			
Brotbeutel:			
Trinkbecher:			
Feldflasche:			
Wolldecken:	1		
Gewehr Nr.:			
Seitengewehr Nr.:			

Ausgegeben: Richtig empfagen:

Courtesy of the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine, HDA SBU, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 67827.

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According to Ukraine's KGB, the overall guidance for "Retribution" was implemented by the central KGB office in Moscow, and this operation included several strategic directions: 1) gathering intelligence (*razrabotka*) about OUN members who had functioned in the Soviet Union and Soviet territories occupied by the Nazis and who managed to escape from the Soviet "sword" to the West; 2) identifying OUN members who became active in the anti-communist human rights movement in the West and channeling evidence (or forgeries) of their collaboration with the Nazis to Western governments;[61] 3) publishing and distributing in the United States and Canada two editions of the book by the American Communist of Ukrainian origin Michael Hanusiak entitled *Lest We Forget* (*Chtoby my ne zabyli*) which included the list of OUN members, alleged Nazi collaborators;[62] 4) creating three counterpropaganda films and sharing them with 17 anti-fascist organizations in the West; 5) publishing articles in American mass media about mass demonstrations in Ukraine demanding to extradite Nazi collaborators to the USSR where they would be brought to justice; 6) publishing articles in pro-Soviet Western Ukrainian newspapers, such as *News from Ukraine*, in which Ukrainian émigrés would be portrayed as Nazi collaborators; 6) sending petitions of the same content written by Soviet citizens and addressed to the American government.[63] The overall goal was to smear and discredit Ukrainian nationalists in the eyes of the Jewish community to break their alliance.

In October 1985, in his report to Ukraine's Communist Party boss Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi, the KGB head Stepan Mukha assessed the effectiveness of this operation. He claimed that the active measures conducted within the framework of "Retribution" were quite successful, suggesting that the operation to a large extent

61 For instance, the KGB gathered information about Petro (Pavlo) Rudenko, a Ukrainian who resided in Australia, for the purpose of "potentially compromising him" in the eyes of the international community as a Nazi collaborator. See HDA SBU, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 67827, ark. 208.

62 Michael Hanusiak, *Lest We Forget*, 1st ed. (New York: The Ukrainian-American League, 1973).

63 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1230, ark. 169.

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shaped the OSI's activities and public opinion in the United States, which were "expedient to us [the USSR; the KGB]."[64] Observing the achievements of "Retribution," the KGB made a decision to employ similar operational tactics in Canada. The KGB encouraged the influential Canadian newspaper *Toronto Star* to publish articles about the crimes of the SS-Halychyna, and distributed a book in Canada entitled *We Accuse* (*My obviniaiem*) about how the Nazis used this Ukrainian formation (SS-Halychyna). In addition, the KGB sent materials about 59 collaborators and their war crimes to the Canadian authorities. "Public opinion that we shaped was quite convenient for us. It forced the Canadian government to establish a commission in February 1985 that began to gather information about war criminals and Nazi collaborators," Mukha posited. He also informed Shcherbytskyi that these measures pushed Western OUN members to spend substantial funds to defend themselves and to prove that they were innocent. Mukha was convinced that these active measures not only distracted the "nationalists" from their anti-Soviet activities, but also left little soft money to continue their propaganda. The concluding remarks of this report assured the party that the success of "Retribution" dictated its reconceptualization and continuation, and that counterintelligence channels established by the KGB would facilitate the distribution of additional materials that would further compromise OUN leaders in the United States and Canada. It was decided that special attention would be paid to the distribution of films and books produced under the supervision of the KGB.[65]

Ultimately, the honorable goal of bringing war criminals to justice was overshadowed by other KGB considerations—to settle old scores with OUN and the Vlasov Army members, to take revenge on those Western activists who tried to destroy the USSR's reputation and ruin the Soviet narrative of a just society with victorious communist achievements, and to break the alliance between the Western Jewish and Ukrainian communities. Demjanjuk's en-

64 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1230, ark. 169.
65 HDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1230, ark. 170.

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during legal battles in the United States, Israel, and Germany divided Ukrainians and Jews and exacerbated their hostilities toward one another, signaling a triumph for the KGB.[66] Moreover, this case reaffirmed the image of Ukrainians as antisemites, inviting the majority of Western commentators to offer their readers a truncated story of Demjanjuk's odyssey, in which the results of his lawyers' appeals in Germany and the forensic probes of the validity of the Trawniki ID card were thoroughly omitted. Jim McDonald's account about how the OSI tried to obstruct justice and to prevent Demjanjuk's defense from inviting witnesses to take part in the "mistrial of the century" was also forced into oblivion.

In 1993, Ukraine's security services (SBU) received materials from the independent German Jewish magazine *SemitTimes* that informed the Ukrainian government that: 1) Lehner's research and Dr. Werner's statement proved the Trawniki ID card to be a "deliberate forgery;"[67] 2) there was no convincing evidence whatsoever that would place Demjanjuk in Sobibor and link him to any potential war crimes; and 3) Demjanjuk passed away in Germany as a legally innocent man.[68] The German Jews reached out to the SBU to confirm that the Demjanjuk case was manufactured in Moscow, something that many understood but could not prove.

Several decades ago, the director of Radio Liberty in Ukraine Roman Kupchinsky (1944–2010) argued that the Russian disinformation campaign in the 1960s–1970s was organized by the highest

66 Vic Satzewich, *The Ukrainian Diaspora* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 173–74. For more details about the dialogue between American officials and the Ukrainian diaspora who were concerned about Soviet forgeries in Demjanjuk's case, see Myron B. Kuropas, "Fighting Moscow from Afar: Ukrainian Americans and the Evil Empire," in *Anti-Communist Minorities in the U.S.: Political Activism of Ethnic Refugees*, ed. Ieva Zake (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 60–61; Kuropas, *Ukrainian-American Citadel*, 567–74, 624–27. For more details about the Demjanjuk affair, see Sheftel, *The Demjanjuk Affair*.

67 HDA SBU, f. 68, op. 1, spr. 3, tom 2, ark. 14; see also Jerome A. Brentar, "My Campaign for Justice for John Demjanjuk," *The Journal of Historical Review* 13, no. 6 (1993): 2–8; also available at http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v13/v13n6p-2_Brentar.html (accessed 24 June 2020).

68 HDA SBU, f. 68, op. 1, spr. 3, tom 2, ark. 19; see also Marek Bem, *Sobibor Extermination Camp: 1942–1943*, trans. Tomasz Karpiński and Natalia Sarzyńska-Wójtowicz (Amsterdam: Stichting Sobibor, 2015), 320–21.

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echelons of power in the USSR as a response to rapprochement between the Ukrainian and Jewish diasporas and the state of Israel for the purpose of defending the human rights of Soviet dissidents. Indeed, for the Soviets, the consolidation of Western forces that helped release Soviet dissidents and expose human rights abuses and state violence in the Soviet Union meant a blow against the myth about the USSR as the most humane world system.[69] The archival documents discovered in the former Communist Party archive in Kyiv (Ukraine) and recently declassified KGB and CIA documents confirm Kupchinsky's argument and fully expose the plans of Soviet authorities to disrupt these unifying activities.[70]

Beyond the KGB, high-ranking Soviet Ukrainian officials contributed greatly to this campaign, from the Central Committee of Ukraine's Communist Party (TsK KPU) to most important Soviet institutions, such as Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ukraine's Academy of Sciences. For instance, in July 1976, following Moscow's orders, two members of the TsK KPU Anatolii Merkulov, the head of the Department of Foreign Relations, and Iurii Ielchenko, the head of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation, informed Valentyn Malanchuk, Ukraine's key ideologue, about the pressing need to launch a counter propaganda campaign

69 Roman Kupchinsky, "Nazi War Criminals: The Role of Soviet Disinformation," in *Ukraine During World War II: History and Its Aftermath*, ed. Yury Boshyk (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1986), 143; Myron Kuropas, "Ukrainian Americans and the Search for War Criminals," in *Ukraine During World War II: History and its Aftermath*, ed. Yury Boshyk (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1986), 151; Satzewich, *The Ukrainian Diaspora*, 174.

70 Ruffner, "From the End of the Cold War to the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act (U)." See also an analysis of KGB objectives and practices in the 1970s–1980s by Herbert Romerstein, a former staff member of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the U.S. House of Representatives and chief of the Office to Counter Soviet Disinformation and Active Measures at the United States Information Agency, "Divide and Conquer: The KGB Disinformation Campaign against Ukrainians and Jews," *The Institute of World Politics*, 1 November 2004, https://www.iwp.edu/news_publications/detail/divide-and-conquer-the-kgb-disinformation-campaign-against-ukrainians-and-jews (accessed 7 May 2019); and Olga Bertelsen, "Political Affinities and Maneuvering of Soviet Political Elites: Heorhii Shevel and Ukraine's Ministry of Strange Affairs in the 1970s," *Nationalities Papers*: *The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 47, no. 3 (2019): 394–411.

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to neutralize the activities of the Ukrainian diaspora nationalists who seemed to coordinate their efforts with the Western Jewish diaspora. Merkulov and Ielchenko suggested that in order to break this union, the TsK should engage historians from the Institute of History of Ukraine's Academy of Sciences. Scholars would provide the Western and Soviet Jewish community with documents that would compromise Ukrainian nationalists in their eyes. Evidence of Ukrainians' violence against Soviet Jews during the Second World War that "exceeded that of the Nazi" would serve this purpose. "Documents, images, and other factual materials would be especially valuable to uncover the hypocrisy of Ukrainian immigrants who yesterday were killing the Jews and today are involved in ingratiating behavior with Zionists," Merkulov and Ielchenko posited.[71] As in the Demjanjuk affair, historical facts and authentic materials mixed with forgeries created by the KGB constituted the evidential base for this operation.

Similar countermeasures were designed by Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Minister Heorhii Shevel who devised a comprehensive plan to restrain the activities of "nationalists" abroad.[72] Shevel's propositions transformed Soviet diplomats into intelligence officers who gathered information, recruited young Ukrainian emigres, and fed disinformation to the Ukrainian and Jewish communities in North America.[73]

This secret campaign, it was thought, would distract the attention of the world community from the human rights issue in the USSR, and would disrupt the concerted effort of various ethnic communities abroad aimed at mobilizing a wider international community to help Soviet dissidents. At the very least, the campaign would obscure Soviet nationalities policies that denied Ukrainians and Jews their right to develop their languages and cultures.

71 Tsentralnyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Hromadskykh Obiednan Ukrainy (hereafter: TsDAHOU), f. 1, op.25, spr.1362, ark. 1, 2, 8.

72 TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 25, spr. 1891, ark. 55; Bertelsen, "Political Affinities and Maneuvering of Soviet Political Elites."

73 TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 25, spr. 1891, ark. 69–71; Bertelsen, "Political Affinities and Maneuvering of Soviet Political Elites."

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Epilogue

Despite KGB active measures, Western grassroots human rights movements, Helsinki agreement monitors, and many other diaspora interest groups and associations directly and indirectly galvanized significant change in the Soviet Union, and ultimately across Europe. Many observers hold that the end of the Cold War became possible due to the civic gallantry of human rights activists and the transnational cooperation of various ethnic communities, at times conflicting and difficult, and at times enjoyable and fruitful.

The Soviet ideological subversion operations were nevertheless effective, shaping the perceptions and views of American officials and obscuring investigations of American intelligence agencies. Examining in detail the Demjanjuk case, the CIA claimed that the agency had been one of the OSI's most important sources of information: "Between 1980 and 1995, the Central Intelligence Agency had conducted over 1000 name traces for the Office of Special Investigations."[74] The CIA was careful in publicizing its official position in this case but secretly warned the OSI about the fraudulent nature of Demjanjuk's Trawniki ID card. Ultimately, the CIA refrained from further involvement in the Demjanjuk debacle. Yet the CIA report, declassified in 2004, reveals its critical stance toward the OSI. The report traces in detail the developments after 1992, when pressure from the Ukrainian diaspora forced the U.S. Government to review the wrongdoing of the OSI in the Demjanjuk case. In June 1993, Judge Thomas A. Wiseman, Jr., identified the OSI's investigation and behavior as "reckless" but also suggested that the "OSI had not engaged in any prosecutorial misconduct."[75] However, another group of judges from the same circuit court disagreed with Wiseman, arguing that the OSI's "former director Allan A. Ryan, Jr., and Norman Moscowitz had suppressed contravening evidence about Demjanjuk and bowed to pressure from Jewish interest groups anxious for a successful case."[76] This ruling shed doubts on the OSI's and its attorneys' ethical standards, which

74 Ruffner, 136, 141.
75 Ibid., 129.
76 Ibid., 129–30.

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prompted Neal M. Sher to resign as the OSI's director in 1994. The new director Eli M. Rosenbaum and the OSI's team of lawyers reopened the case, filing a new law suit against Demjanjuk in 1999 whom they accused of serving as an SS guard at several concentration camps—in Lublin, the Landed Estate Okzow, the Majdanek, Flossenberg, and the Sobibor death camp after being trained at the Nazis' Trawniki Training Camp. As mentioned earlier, the U.S. government allowed the OSI to proceed with these allegations that resulted in Demjanjuk being deported to Germany to stand trial yet again.

The archival documents discovered in the former KGB archives and presented in this study unequivocally demonstrate that the KGB operation "Retribution" inflicted unimaginable torture by the U.S. Government on an innocent American citizen (and his family) who was forced to stand trial in three countries for false allegations, to be confined for years in a solitary confinement cell, to be sentenced to death, and to be derided for his refusal to "confess" to horrendous crimes he did not commit, and to eventually die far from his home and relatives. Combining with other active measures, sponsored by the KGB, such as publishing dozens of anti-Ukrainian books and pamphlets whose leitmotif was a condemnation of Ukrainian nationalists and war time criminals, the KGB operation had achieved its goals.[77]

Sadly, the Soviet transnational covert operation "Retribution" engraved in Jewish memory the image of Ukrainians as anti-Semites and Nazi collaborators, an image that seemed to hamper collaboration between the Western Ukrainian and Jewish communities for decades. As McDonald aptly noted, despite the inability to prove Demjanjuk's guilt, the discrepancies in the testimonies of the prosecution's witnesses, and most importantly, the concealment of evidence that suggested the fabricated nature of the case, the OSI, together with the KGB and the Israeli and German courts, made Demjanjuk the "Ukrainian symbol for the World War II Holocaust

77 Myron B. Kuropas, *Scourging of a Nation: CBS and the Defamation of Ukraine* (Kingston and Kyiv: The Kashtan Press, 1995), 28.

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of the Jews, second only to the German Eichmann."[78] Clearly, the KGB's detrimental influence in shaping Ukrainian-Jewish relations was enormous, but it would be myopic to make one side (or the KGB) accountable for the deceleration of dialogue between Ukrainians and Jews. Throughout history, both "solitudes" were unkind to one another. The antisemitic or anti-Ukrainian stances survived the 1980s and the collapse of the Soviet Union, complicating the rapprochement of two diaspora communities and their cooperation and engagement in the human rights movement. Beyond diaspora human rights activism, these attitudes can be traced in Western academia, mass media, and even among those who survived Soviet camps.[79] For many individuals on both sides stereotypical thinking prevailed, inviting the abandonment of logic and common sense altogether.

Today, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, as well as others, continues to perpetuate falsehoods and conceal crucial information in the Demjanjuk case. The sloppiness of the narrative placed on its official site begins with the title of the encyclopedia entry pertaining to Demjanjuk's alleged collaboration with the Nazis, "John Demjanjuk: Prosecution of a Nazi *Coloborat*." Missing "n" or "or" in one of the titles is a minor error among other major omissions and concealment of information about the Demjanjuk case.

78 McDonald, 29–30.

79 Levko Lukianenko, former Soviet dissident and political prisoner, published his notorious antisemitic text, which prompted another former Soviet dissident and political prisoner, Yakov Suslenskii, to send Lukianenko a letter, notifying him about the break in their friendship; on Lukianenko's antisemitism, see Iosif Zisels's interview with Maksim Sukhanov, "Ievrei Ukrainy ili ukrainskiie ievrei?" *Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine*, May 2015, http://vaadua.org/news/iosif-zisels-evrei-ukrainy-ili-ukrainskie-evrei (accessed 24 June 2020); Semen Gluzman's interview with Mikhail Gold, "V SSSR byli eshche odni ievrei—ukraintsy," *Lekhaim*, No. 5772—2 (238), February 2012, https://lechaim.ru/ARHIV/238/gold.htm (accessed 24 June 2020). Similarly, in his 23 October 1994, CBS TV's 60 Minutes broadcast *The Ugly Face of Freedom*, Morley Safer, a Canadian-American broadcast journalist, reporter, and correspondent for CBS News, claimed that all Ukrainians were "genetically anti-Semitic." This episode was watched by approximately 17.5 million households. Despite the firm position of the American Jewish Committee who in their letter to CBS rejected Safer's superficial view of Ukraine and Ukrainians, Safer's program reaffirmed the beliefs of many American Jews about the chronic nature of Ukrainian antisemitism. See Kuropas, *Scourging of a Nation*, 20, 25, 26.

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Moreover, the encyclopedia entry contains bluntly falsified information about the Soviet forgery of Demjanjuk's alleged Trawniki card, the "main evidence" of Demjanjuk's guilt for those who engage in the art of not seeing fabrications. The authors of the false narrative at this website write: "Demjanjuk's defense claimed that the card was a Soviet-inspired forgery, despite several forensic tests that verified it as authentic,"[80] when in fact all forensic tests conducted by independent experts mentioned earlier established the fabrication of this document beyond any doubt. The FBI arrived at a similar conclusion in a declassified FBI field office report in 2011, obtained by *The Associated Press*. It cast doubt on the authenticity of a Nazi ID card that was the key evidence in allegations that Mr. Demjanjuk served as a guard at the Sobibor death camp in occupied Poland.[81] Most recently, the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. subscribed to the views of historian Martin Cueppers and his assumption about "new evidence of Demjanjuk's guilt."[82] The discovery of new photos from Sobibor which were donated to the Museum's archives prompted new unsubstantiated claims by Cueppers: "Two prints probably show Demjanjuk who was transported to Sobibor in March 1943." Cueppers continued that "the historians approached police to help them identify Demjanjuk. 'The conclusion that it is probably John Demjanjuk was a combination of the most modern police methods and historic research.'"[83] Similarly, in his interview, Daniel Bloch, the co-director of a five-part

80 "John Demjanjuk: Prosecution of a Nazi Collaborator," *Holocaust Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2020), https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/john-demjanjuk-prosecution-of-a-nazi-collaborator (accessed 25 June 2020).

81 David Rising and Randy Herschaft, "FBI Report Suggests Demjanjuk Nazi ID Was a Fake," *Pittsburgh Post-Gasette*, 13 April 2011, https://www.post-gazette.com/news/nation/2011/04/13/FBI-report-suggests-Demjanjuk-Nazi-ID-was-a-fake/stories/201104130243 (accessed 25 June 2020).

82 "Museum Releases Possible Photo of 'Ivan the Terrible' Demjanjuk at Sobibor," *The Jerusalem Post*, 28 January 2020, https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/possible-photo-of-ivan-the-terrible-at-sobibor-released-615657 (accessed 25 June 2020).

83 Madeline Chambers, "Newly Discovered Photos of Nazi Death Camp May Show Guard Demjanjuk: Historians," *Reuters*, 28 January 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-holocaust-memorial-germany-sobibor/newly-discovered-photos-of-nazi-death-camp-probably-show-guard-demjanjuk-idUSKBN1

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documentary series featuring the Demjanjuk case, "The Devil Next Door," that Netflix released last year speculated about the newly released photos from Sobibor this way: "I think the need to positively identify Demjanjuk as 'the guy who did the worst things' is about wanting to achieve closure, closing the circle around what happened. But you can't get closure for mass murder. There is no such thing. Assuming the pictures reveal something real, as they appear, it just adds another layer of knowledge in the open account we have with anyone who commits horrors against other human beings."[84]

These speculations continue to impede the progress in the diasporas' cooperation. One might argue that cooperation between the Ukrainian and Jewish diasporas in North America was more pronounced at the peak of the Cold War than today. The release of Leonid Pliushch, Vladimir Bukovsky, and Natan Sharansky, as well as many other Soviet dissidents, became possible due to intense human rights international campaigns, where the role of Ukrainian, Russian, and Jewish diaspora groups was significant, and cooperation among them was crucial. By the end of 1988, approximately 600 political prisoners were released and emigration increased to 80,000,[85] providing momentary cause for future optimism.

The machinations of the OSI in the Demjanjuk case, as well as KGB reports on the covert operation "Retribution" designed to undermine this cooperation, are part of history and public record. In 1990, McDonald lamented that like other trials, the Demjanjuk trial

ZR20A (accessed 25 June 2020); see also Tom Teicholz, "Why Are We So Obsessed With John Demjanjuk?," *Forward*, 29 January 2020, https://forward.com/opinion/439086/why-are-we-so-obsessed-with-john-demjanjuk/ (accessed 25 June 2020).

84 Erik Kirschbaum, "Newly Released Photos Suggest John Demjanjuk Was Sobibor Death Camp Guard," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 January 2020, https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-01-28/demjanjuk-sobibor-nazi-holocaust-death-camp (accessed 25 June 2020).

85 Sarah B. Snyder, "'Promising Everything Under the Sun': Helsinki Activism and Human Rights in Eastern Europe," in *The Establishment Responds: Power, Politics, and Protest since 1945*, eds. Kathrin Fahlenbrach, Martin Klimke, Joachim Scharloth, and Laura Wong (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 98.

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in Israel had become a sham, and "erstwhile victims have now become oppressors."[86] Thirty years later, the narrative that had been plotted by the KGB continues to gain strength, and falsehoods concocted by the Soviets and disseminated by institutions in the West, override most recent archival studies, making two diasporas, Ukrainians and Jews, drift further apart. Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern has argued that "… the second-half-of-the-20th century rapprochement between Ukrainians and Jews became the cause of few, not the cause of many,"[87] evoking sad parallels with the twenty-first century. There is, however, hope that hostilities among Ukrainians and Jews is an exception rather than a typical representation and a durable trope of human consciousness.

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86 McDonald, 62.

87 Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "Reconceptualizing the Alien: Jews in Modern Ukrainian Thought," *Ab Imperio*, no. 4 (2003): 578.

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Disinformation
Soviet Origins of Contemporary Russian Ukrainophobia

Taras Kuzio

The Soviet Union was very active in the field of disinformation (*dezinformatsiia*) and practiced "subversion, disinformation and forgery, combined with the use of special forces."[1] The Soviet secret police, the KGB (Committee for State Security), "had a special department responsible for 'active measures,' designed to weaken and undermine the West."[2]

Active measures were treated as different to espionage and counter-intelligence. These included written and spoken disinformation, efforts to manipulate the media in foreign countries, the use of foreign communist parties and front organizations that were controlled by the Communist Party's International Department, clandestine radio stations, and blackmail and political influence through collaborative elites. The means for the USSR to pursue active measures included forgeries (a well-known example was that of a U.S. military manual and "secret" diplomatic letters), rumors, insinuations, "altered facts," and lies. Many of these active measures are similar to contemporary aspects of Russian information warfare and disinformation.

What ties Soviet and contemporary Russian information warfare and disinformation is that they are both obsessed with Ukraine and Ukrainians. This can only be explained through an understanding of how Russian nationalism (whether in the USSR or in Vladimir Putin's Russia) cannot treat Ukraine as a sovereign country or Ukrainians as a people separate from Russians.

1 "The Fog of Wars," *The Economist*, 22 October 2016, http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21708880-adventures-abroad-boost-public-support-home-fog-wars (accessed 14 May 2020).

2 "The Fog of Wars;" see also Richard H. Shultz and Roy Godson, *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy* (New York, NY: Pergamon Press, Inc., 1984).

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This chapter is divided into three sections. The first analyzes Soviet and Russian information warfare and disinformation, showing a continuity between the two. The second examines Soviet and Russian nationalist attitudes toward Ukraine and Ukrainians. The third discusses eight themes inherited from the Tsarist Russian Empire, White émigrés, and the Soviet Union that have created the foundation for how Russian information warfare and disinformation treat Ukraine and Ukrainians.

Soviet Origins of Russian Information Warfare and Disinformation

Soviet and Russian "Wet Operations" and Terrorism

From its inception, the USSR had undertaken "wet actions" (assassinations) against opponents of the Soviet regime. The Soviet secret police had conducted assassinations against leaders of anti-Soviet diaspora groups whom Moscow viewed as traitors, a viewpoint contemporary Russia continues to harbor against defectors living abroad.

Ukrainian nationalist leaders were prominent targets of Soviet "wet operations." In 1926, only four years after the USSR was founded, a Soviet agent assassinated Ukrainian nationalist leader Symon Petliura in Paris. This was followed by three further assassinations of Ukrainian nationalist leaders Yevhen Konovalets in Rotterdam in 1939, and Lev Rebet and Stepan Bandera in Munich in 1957 and 1959, respectively.[3] The assassination of Lev Rebet was viewed as a trial run for Bandera when the KGB assassin used a cyanide poison gun which left no traces and simulated a heart attack.[4] Poison has continued to remain a favorite method for Russian assassins in Europe.

3 Pavel Sudoplatov and Anatoli Sudoplatov (with Jerrold L. and Leona P. Schecter), *Special Tasks: The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness – A Soviet Spy Master* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 13–29.

4 For more details about the KGB's murder of Ukrainian émigrés and their assassin Bohdan Stashinskyi, see Serhii Plokhy, *The Man with the Poison Gun: A Cold War Spy Story* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

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Despite the embarrassment produced by the defection of KGB assassin Bohdan Stashinskyi, the USSR continued to undertake "wet operations" through the mid-1980s. In 1978, Bulgarian BBC journalist Georgi Markov was murdered in London with ricin poison administered by an assassin's umbrella. The former KGB general Oleg Kalugin revealed that Markov was assassinated by the Bulgarian secret service and that the head of the KGB Yurii Andropov approved the operation.[5] Ricin continues to be popular among FSB associates. In spring 2020, a Russian diplomat was flagged by the Czech security service transporting ricin to Prague to be used against Czech politicians.[6] In 1981, there was an attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II (Wojtyla) whom the Soviet Union feared was supporting the Solidarity movement in Poland. The assassin was a far-right Turkish nationalist, unwittingly working for the Bulgarian secret service.[7] The plot revealed many details of how the KGB used false flag operations to disguise its involvement. Soviet archives brought to the West by KGB defector Vasili Mitrokhin showed the extent of the Soviet penetration of Italy and other European countries, and how Soviet military intelligence, the GRU, was behind the failed assassination of the Pope.[8] GRU special forces, known as "little green men" who invaded Crimea and mainland Ukraine in spring 2014, were "straight from the KGB playbook."[9]

5 Anastasia Kirilenko and Claire Bigg, "Ex-KGB Agent Kalugin: Putin Was 'Only a Major'," *Radio Free Europe*, 31 March 2015, https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-ex-kgb-kalugin-putin-only-a-major/26930384.html (accessed 22 May 2020).

6 Tony Wesolowsky, "Media Identify Russian in Alleged Plot to Poison Czech Officials with Ricin," *Radio Free Europe*, 11 May 2020, https://www.rferl.org/a/media-out-russian-in-alleged-plot-to-poison-czech-officials-with-ricin/30606089.html (accessed 22 May 2020). For a historical sketch about ricin use, see Richard H. Ward, Latjeem Kiernan, and Daniel Mabrey, *Homeland Security: An Introduction*, 1st ed. (Cincinnati, OH: Anderson, 2006), 218–21.

7 Paul B. Henze, *The Plot to Kill the Pope* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); Jeffrey M. Bale, "The Ultranationalist Right in Turkey and the Attempted Assassination of Pope John Paul II," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 15, no. 1 (1991): 1–63.

8 Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 662–706.

9 Luke Harding, "Spies, Sleepers and Hitmen: How the Soviet Union's KGB Never Went Away," *The Guardian*, 19 January 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/19/spies-spooks-hitmen-kgb-never-went-away-russia-putin (accessed 14 May 2020).

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"Wet operations" have continued to the present day. Since 2006, Russia has undertaken assassinations of Chechen leaders and intelligence defectors. Russian intelligence agents conduct assassinations and terrorist campaign inside Ukraine. There are close parallels between the attempted poisoning of the presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko in 2004 in Kyiv and the poisoning of Aleksandr Litvinenko in 2006 in London. Yushchenko was poisoned with dioxin, and Litvinenko with radioactive polonium-210, both produced in Russian laboratories inherited from the USSR. The Ukrainian authorities accused Russia of being behind the poisoning of Yushchenko. An extensive British government inquiry into the assassination of Litvinenko blamed the Russian authorities, concluding that Putin "probably" approved his murder.[10]

Since 2014, Russian intelligence services have conducted a targeted series of assassinations in the West and Ukraine. U.S. intelligence ties fourteen assassinations abroad (aside from Ukraine) to Russia. Russian exile Denis Voronenkov, who had fled Russia into exile in Ukraine and was a key witness in the criminal case against former President Viktor Yanukovych, was murdered in March 2017 in Kyiv. In June 2017, Chechen exile Adam Osmayev was seriously wounded in an attack by "Alex Werner," a fake *Le Monde* journalist who was a Chechen organized crime leader from St. Petersburg in the 1990s (his real name was Artur Denisultanov-Kurmakayev). Osmayev was saved by his wife who carried her own gun and shot and killed the assassin. Osmayev had organized and led the Dzhokhar Dudayev Chechen volunteer battalion that has been fighting against Russian proxy forces in the Donbas. In the same month Colonel Maksym Shapoval, commander of Ukraine's military intelligence special forces, was murdered in a car bomb in Kyiv.

Another form of "wet operations"—terrorism—was a means to pursue Soviet objectives when use of its armed forces was impractical, ineffective, risky or too difficult. In the 1960s and 1970s, the USSR and its eastern European allies, particularly the GDR and

10 Robert Owen, "The Litvinenko Inquiry: Report into the Death of Alexander Litvinenko, 21 January 2016," *The National Archives*, 13 June 2016, http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160613090324/https://www.litvinenkoinquiry.org/report (accessed 14 May 2020).

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Bulgaria, supported terrorist groups in Germany (Red Army Faction), Italy (Red Brigades), Corsican region of France (Armata Corsa [*Corsican* Army]), Basque region of Spain (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna [Basque Homeland and Liberty]), Greece (Revolutionary Organization 17 November), Canada (Front de libération du *Québec*), and the United Kingdom (IRA). The USSR also backed what it defined as national liberation movements in Africa and Central and Latin America.[11] The KGB invented airplane hijackings which grew in the 1970s and became a trademark of Palestinian liberation groups.[12]

After close ties were established between the USSR and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1973–1974, the guerrilla group was transformed into a fully-fledged army. The extent of the huge volume of Soviet military assistance provided to Palestinian groups became apparent after large stockpiles of weapons were captured by Israel during its invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Most of these weapons were sold to the United States and sent to Afghan guerrillas fighting Soviet occupation forces. Syria, where Russia has been militarily involved since 2016 in support of the Bashar al-Asad regime, had been a major conduit for Soviet military supplies to the PLO and more extremist Palestinian terrorist groups.

In 2014–2016, Russian intelligence trained its own citizens and Donbas separatist forces to undertake a terrorist campaign throughout Ukraine.[13] With the failure of Russia's so-called "New Russia" (*Novorossiia*) project to incite pro-Russian uprisings in eastern and southern Ukraine, Moscow turned to creating political instability by launching bomb attacks in major cities outside the Donbas, such as Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Odesa.

11 Nick Lockwood, "How the Soviet Union Transformed Terrorism," *The Atlantic*, 23 December 2011, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/12/how-the-soviet-union-transformed-terrorism/250433/ (accessed 14 May 2020).

12 Lockwood, "How the Soviet Union Transformed Terrorism."

13 Taras Kuzio, "Why Russia Should Be Added to the State Sponsors of Terrorism List," *Foreign Affairs*, 25 January 2015, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2015-01-25/ukraine-reignites (accessed 22 May 2020).

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Soviet and Russian Hybrid Warfare

The USSR had pursued hybrid warfare and regime change in Afghanistan, Africa, and Central and Latin America where it had deployed special forces in advance of invasions or trained local forces and what it defined as national liberation groups. The USSR had forty training bases for national liberation groups with an annual expenditure of $200 million.[14] Other training bases for terrorists and national liberation groups were found in Soviet satellite states such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and the GDR.

The continuity between Soviet KGB and Russian FSB/GRU special operations could be seen in Georgia's province of Abkhazia where in the early 1990s separatists were on the verge of being defeated. A ceasefire was called, separatist Russian proxies were rearmed from Chechnya, FSB and GRU advisers were provided, the war was re-launched, and they advanced and won back territory. Ultimately, Georgia was forced into accepting a frozen conflict on Moscow's terms.

Russian forces have a record of intervening when Russian proxies have been on the verge of defeat, whether in Moldova's Trans-Dniestr in 1992, Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 1992 and 2008, and Ukraine's Donbas in 2014.[15] In the Donbas, there were clear stages to the escalation of combat. Between March and May 2014, agitation and propaganda (i.e., information warfare) was followed by the seizure of state institutions, a situation that Philip A. Karber would describe as the transition from protests to terrorism.[16] This was an important tipping point as the crisis could not

14 Taras Kuzio and Paul D'Anieri, *The Sources of Russia's Great Power Politics: Ukraine and the Challenge to the European Order* (Bristol, England: E-International Relations, 2018), 25–60; also available at https://www.e-ir.info/publication/the-sources-of-russias-great-power-politics-ukraine-and-the-challenge-to-the-european-order/ (accessed 22 May 2020), 31.

15 Oscar Jonsson and Robert Seely, "Russian Full-Spectrum Conflict: An Appraisal after Ukraine," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 28, no.1 (2015): 1.

16 Philip Karber, "Russia's Hybrid War Campaign: Implications for Ukraine and Beyond," presentation at the Russian Military Forum at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., 10 March 2015, *CSIS*, 2020, https://www.csis.org/events/russian-military-forum-russias-hybrid-war-campaign-implications-ukraine-and-beyond (accessed 14 May 2020). Phillip Karber is President of the Potomac Foundation, a defense and foreign policy think-tank.

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have escalated into open warfare without external backing from Russia.

During this stage in spring 2014, Russian intelligence officers were financing and training "anti-fascist" vigilantes in eastern Ukraine, and many of them later joined Russian proxies in the Donbas. A PBS documentary on strife in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv in March 2014 interviewed pro-Russian vigilantes who had been trained and financed by Russian intelligence and recruited as pro-Russian fighters. The PBS journalist reported: "I got hold of this footage showing Igor and his fellow separatists storming the government building, where Ukrainian nationalists opposed to Russia had been holed up. Igor says he was joined by busloads of Russians who'd come across the border earlier that day. But it turns out they were doing it for more than pure political beliefs. Igor boasted that they were being paid to fight."[17] The interviewees admitted to having been paid by Russia $40 an hour to beat up the "Kyiv fascists." One of the vigilantes stated that before all operations he and his colleagues met with Russian intelligence agents who were working undercover in eastern Ukraine.

In the second stage in May–June 2014, Russia transformed the crisis into an insurgency. In July 2014, Russian artillery pounded Ukraine, and the following month, with its proxy forces on the verge of defeat, Russian forces invaded Ukraine and turned the tide of battle after defeating Ukrainian forces in Illovaisk. In the third stage, Russia transformed local militia groups in the Donbas into a 35,000-strong army composed of the I Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and II Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) Corps under the jurisdiction of Russia's Southern Military District.[18] Similar to the mode of command and control for Soviet-backed national liberation groups in the Cold War, the I DNR and II LNR Corps are directed by Russian GRU officers and supplied by the Russian military.

17 James Jones, "The Battle for Ukraine," *PBS*, 27 May 2014, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/battle-for-ukraine/transcript/ (accessed 14 May 2020).

18 Mark Galeotti, *Armies of Russia's War in Ukraine* (Oxford & New York, NY: Osprey Publishing, 2019), 26.

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Soviet and Russian Information Warfare and Dezinformatsiia

As Andrew Wilson has argued, the Soviet and post-Soviet Russian origins of contemporary Russian information warfare and political technology applied to Ukraine are two sides of the same coin, where lies are central to the messaging about Ukraine and Ukrainians.[19] Information warfare and disinformation were immensely important prior to and during Russia's annexation of Crimea and subversion of eastern and southern Ukraine.

Aleksandr Shelepin, who was chairman of the KGB when it undertook the assassination of Rebet and Bandera, oversaw the establishment of a new KGB department, dealing with *dezinformatsiia* upon which contemporary Russian disinformation campaigns have been built. Soviet *dezinformatsiia* manipulated leaders and groups who then acted consciously or otherwise in the interests of the Soviet Union. Paid agents would be consciously working with the Soviet secret services while "useful idiots" would propagate Soviet views unconsciously and indirectly. An important goal of *dezinformatsiia* was to change the balance of forces in favor of the USSR by increasing divisions within Europe and engineering divisions between Trans-Atlantic allies. Contemporary Russian strategies have similar goals of furthering divisions in Europe by supporting separatist groups in Scotland and Spain, anti-grupopulist nationalists in Italy, Germany and elsewhere, and the UK's 2016 Brexit referendum to break up the EU.

The Soviet Union was a master at *dezinformatsiia* through its use of fake news stories and conspiracy theories.[20] It is estimated the USSR conducted 10, 000 *dezinformatsiia* operations during the Cold War, the most famous of which was the claim that the CIA invented AIDS.[21] Other Soviet disinformation targets were against

19 See Chapter 2 "Russia's Putinesca" in Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 19–37.

20 Shultz and Godson, *Dezinformatsia*.

21 Max Bergmann and Carolyn Kenney, *War by Other Means: Russian Active Measures and the Weaponization of Information* (Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress, 2017); also available at https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2017/06/06/433345/war-by-other-means/ (accessed 14 May 2020).

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newly installed nuclear weapons in Europe, proposals to build neutron bombs, and the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement. Soviet covert operations actively fanned anti-Americanism in Europe and Latin America, in particular.

Soviet propaganda and ideological campaigns incessantly attacked Ukrainian émigrés and domestic dissidents and nationalists as "Nazi collaborators," "bourgeois nationalists," and agents of Western and Israeli intelligence agencies. The Soviets expended massive resources on these ideological campaigns through the KGB-controlled Society for Cultural Relations Abroad that published the weekly newspapers *News from Ukraine* and *Visti z Ukrainy*. In addition to ideological tirades lauding Soviet achievements and praising Soviet nationalities policies, these newspapers included stories about Ukrainian emigres who were allegedly "Nazi collaborators" and had close ties to Western intelligence agencies. Ukrainian emigres engaged in anti-Soviet activities that had to be combatted, thwarted and infiltrated.[22]

The term "Banderite" (follower of nationalist leader Stepan Bandera) was used by Soviet propagandists to denote a sadist, murderer, and Nazi accomplice, and this usage has been continued by Russian propagandists since the Euromaidan Revolution. Ukrainians, irrespective of their left, liberal, or right-wing beliefs who support Ukraine's integration into Europe, are denigrated as "nationalists." More often than not, the term "Banderites" (*banderovtsy*) is used by Russian officials and Russian media and disinformation campaigns to characterize Ukrainians in general and pro-Ukrainian activists in particular.[23] A Russian journalist wrote that "[t]he idea

22 "Soviet-Sponsored Societies of Friendship and Cultural Relations" (declassified in 2000), *Central Intelligence Agency*, 1957, CIA-RDP78-00915R000800190022-9, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP78-00915R000800190022-9.pdf (accessed 14 May 2020); Thomas Boghardt, "Operation INFEKTION: Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign," *Studies in Intelligence* 53, no. 4 (2009): 1–24; also available at https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol53no4/pdf/U-%20Boghardt-AIDS-Made%20in%20the%20USA-17Dec.pdf (accessed 14 May 2020). See also Olga Bertelsen's chapter "The KGB Operation 'Retribution' and John Demjanjuk."

23 Katri Pynnoniemi and Andras Rácz, eds., *Fog of Falsehood: Russian Strategy of Deception and the Conflict in Ukraine* (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International

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of an independent Ukraine is Russophobic by definition. That is, either Russia and Ukraine are one country, or they are enemies."[24]

Russia revived Soviet-style tirades against Ukrainian nationalism during Ukraine's 2004 elections in response to the threat represented by Yushchenko. Yushchenko's political party "Our Ukraine" (*Nasha Ukraina*) was labelled "Nashism," a term that resembled "Nazism." By 2013–2014, Russia had far more television and social media resources that it could use in its massive information warfare onslaught against Ukraine and the Euromaidan Revolution. Undoubtedly, the advent of social media in the 2000s makes Russia's dissemination of fake news easier. Russia's information warfare and disinformation have been relentless throughout the six years of low intensity conflict in Ukraine. The EU's *Disinformation Review* offered an analysis of how

> Ukraine is a frequently occurring target in pro-Kremlin disinformation. Some of the more astonishing allegations were even brought to us by the TV channel owned by Russia's Ministry of Defense. Through the years we have seen some truly outrageous claims about Ukraine, from the ludicrous—for example the claim that the Ukrainian army have zombies fighting within their ranks—to the utterly offensive—most infamously the false claim that Ukrainian forces crucified a three-year-old boy in Eastern Ukraine.[25]

Soviet and Russian Cyber Warfare and Hacking

Russia's policies in banning aspects of social media and controlling the Internet have their roots in the Soviet era. In his work, British *Guardian* newspaper journalist Luke Harding has shown how the FSB inherited a KGB-style paranoia, xenophobia, and conspiratorial worldview and an obsession with searching for domestic and foreign enemies.[26] Russian leaders believe color revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine were Western conspiracies orchestrated by Western

Affairs, 2016), 72; also available at http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/588/fog_of_falsehood/ (accessed 14 May 2020).

24 Kirk Bennet, "Russia's Imperial Amnesia," *The American Interest*, 9 May 2017, https://www.the-american-interest.com/2017/05/09/russias-imperial-amnesia/ (accessed 14 May 2020).

25 Kuzio and D'Anieri, *The Sources of Russia's Great Power Politics*, 25–60.

26 Harding, "Spies, Sleepers and Hitmen."

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intelligence agencies with the purpose of undermining Russian security and denying Moscow its sphere of influence in Eurasia.

Andrei Soldatov has pointed out that the banning of VPN proxies

> is time-honoured and can be traced back to Soviet times, before the Internet came to Russia. When the Soviet Union was busy preparing to host the Olympic Games in 1980, it was required to provide automatic international phone connections without an operator—something that was unheard of in the Soviet Union.
> The KGB resisted fiercely. To appease them, the Soviet Ministry of Communications suggested that callers dial not only the number they wanted to call, but also their own, so that no one would go unidentified.[27]

Soldatov has noted that this was exactly the same proposal that the Russian government was offering Internet users, arguing that "[b]ack then, the KGB got what it wanted. Today, it seems that for the people on Lubyanka Square nothing has changed."[28]

Six years prior to Russia's invasion of Crimea, Moscow orchestrated violent riots in Tallinn and a month-long massive cyberattack which targeted computer networks, banks, and the media. The ostensible reason was the Estonian decision to move the Soviet memorial glorifying the Red Army's victory in the Second World War.[29] Russia's anger at the removal of Soviet monuments was displayed in Prague in spring 2020 when the Soviet Marshal Ivan Konev's monument was dismantled, and Russia threatened various forms of retaliation. Since the attack on Estonia, Russia has undertaken numerous cyberattacks in Europe and North America, the most well-known example of which was during the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. Kenneth Geers, a NATO ambassador who focuses on cybersecurity, has argued that one cannot find an area, a space, or an institution that have not been attacked by the Russians.[30]

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27 Andrei Soldatov, "The Kremlin's VPN Ban Has KGB Roots," *Moscow Times*, 1 August 2017, https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/ban-on-vpn-has-kgb-roots-58546?utm_source=push&utm_campaign=010817 (accessed 15 May 2020).

28 Soldatov, "The Kremlin's VPN Ban Has KGB Roots."

29 For an analysis of Russia's attack on Estonia, see Jonas J. Driedger's chapter "Russian Active Measures against Ukraine (2004) and Estonia (2007)."

30 Quoted in Andy Greenberg, "How an Entire Nation Became Russia's Test Lab for Cyberwar," *Wired*, 20 June 2017, https://www.wired.com/story/russian-hackers-attack-ukraine/ (accessed 15 May 2020).

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According to Andy Greenberg, a prominent technology and cybersecurity journalist, cybersecurity experts are convinced that Russia is using Ukraine "as a cyberwar testing ground—a laboratory for perfecting new forms of global online combat."[31] Since 2014, Ukraine has been subject to a "digital blitzkrieg" and a "sustained cyber assault unlike any the world has ever seen."[32] Greenberg has suggested that Russia's hacker army has been extremely active in Ukraine, attacking Ukraine's cyberspace and paralyzing the most significant institutions and organizations. Cyberattacks cut off electricity to nearly a quarter of a million Ukrainians just before Christmas in 2015, another attack hit Ukraine's power grid in December 2016, and a third was unleashed in June 2017. Today, Russia is using its proxy war in the Donbas to test new electronic warfare technology.[33]

Soviet and Contemporary Russian Views of Ukraine and Ukrainians

To understand why Russian information warfare is so obsessed with Ukraine and Ukrainians, one needs to understand how they feature in Soviet and Russian nationalist thinking.

Russian Nationalist Attitudes toward Ukraine and Ukrainians

Soviet historiography and nationality policies described Ukrainians as very close to Russians; nevertheless, they were a separate people living in a de-jure sovereign Soviet republic which was a founding member of the United Nations. Today in the Russian Federation, the Soviet view of Ukraine as a "sovereign" Soviet republic and of Russians and Ukrainians as separate but very close "brotherly" peoples has been replaced by a Tsarist and White émigré view of Ukraine as an artificial construct promoted by the West and of

31 Greenberg, "How an Entire Nation Became Russia's Test Lab for Cyberwar."
32 Ibid.
33 Yuri Lapaiev, "Russian Electronic Warfare in Donbas: Training or Preparation for a Wider Attack?" *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 17, no. 34, 17 March 2020, https://jamestown.org/program/russian-electronic-warfare-in-donbas-training-or-preparation-for-a-wider-attack/ (accessed 15 May 2020).

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Ukrainians as a branch of the Russian people. Russian elites deny the very existence of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. President Vladimir Putin's former senior adviser on Ukraine, Vladislav Surkov said "Ukraine does not exist."[34]

In the Soviet Union, Russian nationalism was officially permitted to flourish within the Communist Party, the KGB, Russian literary journals, and history writing, but it was maintained within ideologically constrained boundaries. When Russian nationalists occasionally dissented from these constraints, they could be accused of anti-Soviet crimes and imprisoned.

These constraints have become redundant in post-Soviet Russia where nationalist émigré writers and pre-Soviet Russian historiography dominate Russian attitudes toward Ukraine and Ukrainians. Frequently quoted by Putin, Ivan Ilyin, anti-Semitic White émigré and philosopher of Russian Christian fascism, denied the very existence of Ukrainians.[35] Moreover, the Tsarist Empire has been rehabilitated, the Soviet Union is valorized as a great power, and ethnic minorities are demoted to second rank status on Russian television which is dominated by Russian great power nationalism.[36]

Putin began his transition to the nationalist right following the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia and the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Russia's active measures were especially pronounced in Ukraine when Russia actively intervened in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections by loaning Russian political technologists,

34 See Aleksei Chesnakov's interview with Vladislav Surkov, *Aktualnyie komentarii*, 26 February 2020, http://actualcomment.ru/surkov-mne-interesno-deystvovat-protiv-realnosti-2002260855.html (accessed 15 May 2020).

35 Anton Barbashin and Hannah Thoburn, "Putin's Philosopher: Ivan Ilyin and the Ideology of Moscow's Rule," *Foreign Affairs*, 20 September 2015, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2015-09-20/putins-philosopher (accessed 15 May 2020); see also Timothy Snyder, "Ivan Ilyin, Putin's Philosopher of Russian Fascism," *NYR Daily*, 16 March 2018, https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/03/16/ivan-ilyin-putins-philosopher-of-russian-fascism/ (accessed 15 May 2020).

36 Marlene Laruelle, "The 'Russian Idea' on the Small Screen: Staging National Identity on Russia's TV," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 22, no. 1 (2014): 330; also available at http://demokratizatsiya.pub/archives/22_2_95W8R530T4103376.pdf (accessed 15 May 2020).

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such as Gleb Pavlovskii, and providing hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance to Yanukovych's election campaign.

The work of Russian political technologists was influenced by Russian nationalist attitudes towards Ukraine and Ukrainians whom they viewed in traditional Russian contours. In posters they produced, Ukraine was divided into "Three Categories" consisting of western Ukraine (First Category), central Ukraine (Second Category), and eastern-southern Ukraine (Third [Lowest] Category), earnestly believing that pro-Western opposition candidate Yushchenko would be defeated, as he would only be supported by the First Category of western Ukrainians.[37]

Russia's ultimate objective was to promote "directed chaos" in Ukraine's 2004 presidential elections through Soviet-style active measures against Yushchenko.[38] These included registering technical (i.e., fake) candidates supporting Yushchenko, financing extremists dressed in SS-style black uniforms parading up and down Kyiv in support of his candidacy, printing forged leaflets, publishing critical books and pamphlets, broadcasting inflammatory TV programs accusing him of being a "fascist" and an American "stooge," and undertaking terrorist attacks which were blamed on his election campaign team.[39] The most egregious example of Russian interference was the poisoning of Yushchenko, and the less well-known foiled terrorist attack on his election's headquarters.[40] "Uncontrolled" and "weaponized" chaos, first used by Russia in Ukraine during the Orange Revolution, is being continued in the Donbas and at times, as with terrorist campaigns, throughout Ukraine.[41]

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37 Taras Kuzio, "State-Led Violence in Ukraine's 2004 Elections and Orange Revolution," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 43, no. 4 (2010): 383–95.

38 Kuzio, "State-Led Violence in Ukraine's 2004 Elections."

39 Taras Kuzio, "Russian Policy to Ukraine During Elections," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 13, no. 4 (2005): 491–517.

40 Kuzio, "Russian Policy to Ukraine During Elections."

41 Mark Galeotti, *Hybrid War or Gibridnaya Voina? Getting Russia's Non-Linear Military Change Right* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Press, 2016); see also "Russia's 'Hybrid' War—Challenge and Threat for Europe," *National Security and Defence*, nos. 9–10 (2016): 2–16, the journal is published by the Razumkov Centre, http://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/journal/eng/NSD167-168_2016_eng.pdf (accessed 15 May 2020).

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Russian proposals to divide Ukrainian territory and annex its Russian-speaking regions were staples of Russian nationalist dissidents in the USSR and nationalist circles in post-Soviet Russia. These demands were found in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's "Rebuilding Russia" manifesto which was published in 1990 and advocated the creation of a Russian Union encompassing Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and northern Kazakhstan. Solzhenitsyn's appeal issued a year later during Ukraine's referendum on independence called into question Ukrainian control over eastern and southern Ukraine.[42] Putin's great power nationalism became especially evident during and after the 2011–2013 Russian protests, known in the West as the Snow Revolution, and his re-election as president when his nationalism moved further to the far right. In 2010, Putin launched the CIS Customs Union (which in 2015 became the Eurasian Economic Union) as a geopolitical alternative to the EU and an opportunity to economically and politically absorb Ukraine.[43] This explains why Solzhenitsyn, a former anti-Soviet political prisoner and Nobel Prize laureate, had become an admirer of former KGB officer Putin.

Many prominent Russian intellectuals embraced this idea and, as the Norwegian scholar Tor Bukkvoll has argued, "the axiom about Russia and Ukraine being one and the same is seldom contradicted in the Russian elite."[44] Moreover, Russian nationalistic attitudes toward Ukrainians are upheld by a majority of the Russian public, ruling elites, and the nationalist wing of the opposition. Putin and Russian leaders have repeatedly stated that "Ukrainians and Russians are one people" which has been echoed by opposition leader Aleksei Navalnyi who stated: "I do not see any difference between Russians and Ukrainians."[45]

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42 Robert Coalson, "Is Putin 'Rebuilding Russia' According to Solzhenitsyn's Design?" *Radio Free Europe*, 1 September 2014, https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-putin-solzhenitsyn-1990-essay/26561244.html (accessed 15 May 2020).

43 Coalson, "Is Putin 'Rebuilding Russia' According to Solzhenitsyn's Design?" Among the members of the Eurasian Customs Union are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia.

44 Tor Bukkvoll, "Why Putin Went to War: Ideology, Interests and Decision-Making in the Russian Use of Force in Crimea and Donbas," *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): 21.

45 Aleksei Venediktov's and Lesia Riabtseva's interview with Aleksei Navalnyi, *Ekho Moskvy*, 15 October 2014, https://echo.msk.ru/programs/focus/1417522-echo/ (accessed 15 May 2020).

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Territorial Demands against "Artificial Ukraine"

As seen in the work of Russian political technologists in the 2004 Ukrainian elections, Russian nationalists divide Ukraine into four parts. The first three (Crimea, New Russia [*Novorossiia*], and Little Russia) are organic parts of the Russian World (*Russkii Mir*), and people like Vladimir Zhirinovskii argue that these territories should be retaken by Russia. The fourth (western Ukraine) has been corrupted by Polish and European influence and lies outside the Russian World.

The transfer of Crimea and the port of Sevastopol from the Russian SFSR to the UkrSSR in March 1954 was never accepted by a wide range of Russian politicians (not just nationalists and communists),[46] and throughout the post-Soviet era the Russian parliament and nationalist groups harboured territorial claims toward them.[47] Since 2014, 85 percent of Russians support the annexation of Crimea with only 10 percent opposed.[48] Another region which Russian nationalists never accepted as being rightfully part of Ukraine was what they call Novorossiia comprising its eastern and southern regions.[49] At NATO's 2008 summit, President Putin told the NATO-Russian Council that the "south of Ukraine is completely populated by Russians,"[50] and in December 2019, he stated that southern Ukraine, or what he then called *Prichernomorie* (Black Sea coastal lands), is populated by Russians.[51]

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46 Igor Gretskiy, "Lukyanov Doctrine: Conceptual Origins of Russia's Hybrid Foreign Policy—The Case of Ukraine," *Saint Louis University Law Journal* 64, no. 1 (2020): 1-22; also available at https://scholarship.law.slu.edu/lj/vol64/iss1/3 (accessed 9 June 2020); and Paul D'Anieri, *Ukraine and Russia: From Civilized Divorce to Uncivil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

47 Crimea was Ukraine's reward for suppressing anti-Soviet guerrilla warfare in Western Ukraine.

48 "Crimea: Five Years," *Levada-Center*, 11 April 2019, https://www.levada.ru/en/2019/04/11/crimea-five-years/ (accessed 15 May 2020).

49 Taras Kuzio, "Russian Stereotypes and Myths of Ukraine and Ukrainians and Why Novorossiya Failed," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 52, no. 4 (2019): 297–309.

50 Vladimir Putin (his speech at the NATO Summit, Bucharest, 2 April 2008), *UNIAN*, 18 April 2018, https://www.unian.info/world/111033-text-of-putins-speech-at-nato-summit-bucharest-april-2-2008.html (accessed 23 May 2020).

51 Vladimir Socor, "Putin and Ukraine's Black Sea Lands: Another Iteration of Novorossiya?" *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 17, no. 2, 14 January 2020, https://james

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Little Russia comprises the region of Ukraine that was part of the Tsarist Russian Empire and consists of west-central and east-central Ukraine. Little Russia includes the capital city of Kyiv. Western Ukraine has never been part of the Tsarist Russian Empire, and its long period under Lithuanian, Polish and Austrian influences has made it, in Russian terms, "Russophobic" and a region that collaborated with the Nazis in the Great Patriotic War. Western Ukrainians and fascism are virtually synonymous in Soviet propaganda, Russian nationalist thought, and contemporary Russian information warfare. Thus, Russian nationalists do not include western Ukraine within the Russian World.[52]

Eastern Slavs Constitute the "Russian People"

Soviet internationalism and Russian nationalism uphold the view that the three eastern Slavs were born in the medieval Kyiv Rus, they have always striven to remain united despite foreign plots to break them apart, and they will indefinitely remain "fraternal" and "brotherly peoples." Soviet mythology of the perpetual "fraternal" nature of friendship between the three eastern Slavic "brotherly peoples" is rooted in the idea of Kyiv as the alleged birthplace of the "Russian" (understood as the three eastern Slavic) peoples. Putin has stated: "We are one people. Kyiv is the mother of Russian cities. The ancient Rus is our common heritage—we cannot live without each other."[53] In November 2016, a monument to Grand Prince Volodymyr, who ruled Kyiv Rus from 980 to 1015, was unveiled in Moscow. Putin's claim about Kyiv Grand Prince Volodymyr was made in contradiction of historical facts because Moscow was only founded in 1147 as a minor town on the edge of the Vladimir-Suzdal principality.[54]

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town.org/program/putin-and-ukraines-black-sea-lands-another-iteration-of-novorossiya/ (accessed 15 May 2020).

52 Anton Shekhovtsov, "Aleksandr Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism and the Russian-Ukrainian War," in *The Politics of Eurasianism: Identity, Popular Culture and Russia's Foreign Policy*, eds. Mark Bassin and Gonzalo Pozo (London, U.K.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 185–204.

53 Pynnoniemi and Racz, *Fog of Falsehood,* 93.

54 Shaun Walker, "From One Vladimir to Another: Putin Unveils Huge Statue in Moscow," *The Guardian*, 4 November 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/

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The Russian World *de facto* plays a similar role as a modern-day successor to Kyiv Rus. The adherents of the Russian World claim that it unites the three Eastern Slavic branches of the "Russian people" through the Russian language, Russian Orthodox Church, and joint suffering in the Great Patriotic War.[55] Russian nationalists view the existence of New and Little Russian Ukraine lying outside the Russian World as incomprehensible and a product of an anti-Russian conspiracy by an alliance of western Ukrainian "Russophobes" and "fascists," Ukrainian oligarchs, Western governments, and intelligence services. Russia has always believed western Ukrainian "fascists" came to power through a putsch during the Euromaidan Revolution and have been controlling Kyiv ever since—even after Volodymyr Zelenskyi was elected in 2019.[56] Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev believes that Ukraine's attempt to break away from Russia was provoked by orders from the West, and this Western domination over Ukraine harms and "ignore[s] the interests of its own people,"[57] meaning the allegedly pro-Russian inhabitants of New and Little Russian Ukraine.

Russian nationalist views of Kyiv Rus and the Russian World had important ramifications in Russian policies toward Ukraine between 2012 and 2013, providing the fuse that ignited the 2014 crisis. In July 2013, Putin visited Ukraine on the 1025th anniversary of the baptism of Kyiv to promote Eastern Slavic unity through the Russian World which would be the core of his planned Eurasian Economic Union. Putin's strategy toward Ukraine "draws from a vision of the Russian World as a process of gathering Russian

world/2016/nov/04/vladimir-great-statue-unveiled-putin-moscow (accessed 9 June 2020).

55 Michał Wawrzonek, "Ukraine in the 'Gray Zone': Between the 'Russkiy Mir' and Europe," *East European Politics and Society* 28, no. 4 (2014): 758–80.

56 Taras Kuzio, *Putin's War Against Ukraine: Revolution, Nationalism, and Crime* (Toronto, Canada: Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Toronto, 2017), 118–40; for an argument about the United States' occupation of Ukraine and the necessity to save the Russian World from the Western hybrid war, see Sergei Glazyev, "Okkupatsiia," *Zavtra*, 7 May 2019, http://zavtra.ru/blogs/glaz_ev_raskol (accessed 15 May 2020).

57 Interview with Nikolai Patrushev, *TASS: Russian New Agency,* 15 January 2019, http://tass.com/world/1040080 (accessed 15 May 2020).

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lands."[58] Throughout 2013, Russia used a mix of trade blockades, territorial threats, and exposure of *kompromat* about President Yanukovych to pressure him into dropping Ukraine's integration into the EU in favor of integration into the CIS Customs Union (Eurasian Economic Union).

Putin's aggressive pressure on Yanukovych and Ukraine sparked the four-month long Euromaidan Revolution which ended with President Yanukovych fleeing from Ukraine and revolutionaries coming to power in what Moscow described as a "putsch." In spring 2014, Russia annexed Crimea and launched hybrid warfare in eastern and southern Ukraine.

Eight Themes in Russian Information Warfare and Disinformation

This section discusses eight themes in contemporary Russian information warfare and disinformation which draw on the previous section's analysis of how Soviet and Russian nationalisms depict Ukraine and Ukrainians. Four of these have their origins in the Soviet Union, two are taken from Tsarist and White émigré views, and the final two are newly created.

Ukrainians as Nazis and Fascists

Portraying Ukrainian nationalists as Nazi and fascist collaborators was a staple of Soviet propaganda and disinformation.[59] Moscow did not therefore have to dig deep to revive this rhetoric in its information warfare and disinformation. Putin's promotion of the Great Patriotic War as a *de facto* state religion revived the tradition that had been established by Communist Party leader Leonid Brezhnev who had made it the biggest Soviet holiday.[60] Russia has targeted Ukraine, the three Baltic states, and Poland as countries

58 Pynnoniemi and Rácz, *Fog of Falsehood*.

59 Taras Kuzio, "Soviet and Russian Anti(Ukrainian) Nationalism and Restalinization," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 49, no. 1 (2016): 87–99.

60 Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

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which had allegedly collaborated with the Nazis and, in Russia's view, are contemporary promoters of fascism and Nazism.

Soviet and Russian information warfare on the Great Patriotic War shares a number of similar narratives.[61] Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians were "Nazi collaborators." Ukrainians are supporters of nationalist leader Bandera. Discussion of Nazi-Soviet collaboration in 1939–1941 is forbidden, and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is justified as a defensive move to win time for the USSR. Poland is blamed for starting the Second World War by participating in the carving up of Czechoslovakia.

The terms *opolchents*y (resistance fighters) and *karateli* ([Nazi] punishers) were used by the Soviet regime in the Great Patriotic War. Today, Russian propaganda uses *opolchents*y in its positive connotations to depict Russian proxies in the Donbas and, *karateli* is connoted as Ukrainian forces who violently suppress the local population in the Donbas. In addition, Russian disinformation attacks NATO and EU institutions whose origins lie in Nazi ideology and are part of American hegemony in the world. Since the Euromaidan Revolution, Ukraine has been overrun by "fascists" and "Nazis." Ukraine was targeted in a report published by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that claimed: "The rise of neo-Nazism and radical nationalism in Ukraine has recently, in particular after the unconstitutional coup d'état of February 2014, reached an unprecedented level." The report stated that in Ukraine there is a "state-level rehabilitation and glorification of Nazi accomplices of World War II" and a "policy of falsification of its history."[62]

Following Russia's occupation of Crimea, the peninsula's media has expanded its repertoire of inflammatory terms. These in-

61 "Nazi East, Nazi West, Nazi Over the Cuckoo Nest," *EU vs Disinfo*, 27 February 2017, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/nazi-east-nazi-west-nazi-over-the-cuckoos-nest/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

62 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Neo-Nazism—a Dangerous Threat to Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law: Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, April 2015), http://www.mid.ru/en/diverse/-/asset_publisher/8bWtTfQKqtaS/content/id/1278647 (accessed 18 May 2020).

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clude terms such as "*banderovtsy*" (followers of Ukrainian nationalist leader Bandera), Ukrainians as a "peasant people" and *khokhly* (a derogatory term for Ukrainians), "Little Russians," "Galician Nazis," *karateli*, "Western puppets," "followers of Hitler," "nationalist extremists," "UkrNazis," "ultranationalists," "Russophobes," and "fascists."[63]

Widespread use of the term "*khokhly*" shows the low depths to which Russian information warfare and disinformation has stooped. *Khokhly* and "crafty *khokhly*" are regularly used on Russian TV in conjunction with Tsarist and White émigré depictions of Ukrainians as "stupid," "dumb," and speaking an "uncivilized language."[64] When such terms are heard on Russian talk shows, there are usually guffaws from the audience.[65]

Ukrainian Nationalists as Practitioners of Genocide against Russian Speakers

Russia's misuse of the term "genocide" began in the 2004 Orange Revolution when it was directed against opposition candidate Yushchenko. In 2008, Russia accused Georgian forces, which had utilized Ukrainian military technology, of committing genocide in South Ossetia. Russian troops allegedly saved South Ossetians in 2008 and Crimean Russian speakers in 2014 from Georgian and Ukrainian "genocide."[66]

The term "genocide" has been repeatedly abused in Russian information warfare since 2014. Russia has continually denied that

63 Aleksandr Burmagin, Irina Sedova, Tatiana Pechonchik, and Olga Skripnik, *Yazyk vrazhdy v informatsionnom prostranstve Kryma: Informatsionno-analiticheskii doklad* (Kyiv: KPG and TsIPCh, 2018); also available at https://crimeahrg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Hate-book-RU.pdf (accessed 18 May 2020). A *khokhol* was a hairstyle, a shock of hair on a shaved head characteristic of the Ukrainian Cossacks. A *khokhol* is singular; *khokhly* is plural.

64 "Tolstoy's Resurrection," *EU vs Disinfo*, 22 October 2018, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/tolstoys-resurrection/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

65 Michele A. Berdy, "Let's Talk about Ukraine: The Word's Worth," *Moscow Times*, 2 April 2019, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/04/02/lets-talk-about-ukraine-a65057 (accessed 18 May 2020).

66 Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 230–31.

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it militarily is involved in the war.[67] The vitriolic nature of Russia's information warfare is pervasive, depicting Ukrainian troops and volunteer battalions as committing "anti-Russian genocide," and raping, pillaging, and murdering their way throughout the Donbas.[68] Each Ukrainian soldier was allegedly promised two slaves and a plot of land in the Donbas. The most famous fake news story was that of a young boy crucified by Ukrainian troops. Another fake news story was President Petro Poroshenko authorizing the *Aidar* volunteer battalion to rape twelve orphan children.[69]

Putin believes that Russian speakers in Ukraine are allegedly threatened by linguicide (language genocide). In December 2019, he ruled out Ukraine re-gaining control over its side of the Russian-Ukrainian border before Kyiv changed its constitution to grant "special status" to the DNR and the LNR. If the border was just returned prior to this constitutional change, "there would be Srebrenica, it's as simple as that."[70] Putin's use of the horrific massacre of 8,000 Bosnian Muslims in July 1995 by Serbian nationalist forces is an example of the over-charged hyperbole about Ukraine and Ukrainians that is commonly found in Russian information warfare and disinformation.

The term genocide has also been misused in Russia's discourse about Crimean Tatars. Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev has been labelled as a terrorist because he allegedly supports terrorist attacks in Crimea to kill Russians and Russian speakers.[71] In

67 Oleksii Vynohradov, "'Nedostrana' i 'grazhdanskaia voina': na chem postroiena rossiiskaia propaganda ob Ukraine?" *Radio Svoboda*, 12 November 2018, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/29595896.html (accessed 18 May 2020).

68 Julia Ioffe, "My Mind-Melting Week on the Battlefields of Ukraine," *The New Republic*, 16 June 2014, https://newrepublic.com/article/118131/week-battlefields-ukraine (accessed 18 May 2020).

69 "Disinformation Review," no. 29, compiled by EEAS East StratCom Task Force, *European External Action Service*, 7 June 2016, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/euvsdisinfo/docs/disinformation_review_07_06_2016_eng.pdf (accessed 18 May 2020).

70 Steve Gutterman, "The Week in Russia: Putin's Bloodshed Bugbear and Srebrenica in the Donbas," *Radio Free Europe*, 13 December 2019, https://www.rferl.org/a/week-in-russia-putin-donbas-bloodshed-srebrenica-ukraine-peace/30324561.html (accessed 18 May 2020).

71 "Russian State TV's Targets This Week: Ukraine, Poland and the US as Antiheroes," *EU vs Disinfo*, 16 September 2017, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/russian-state-

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this case, Russian information warfare and disinformation are imbued with Islamophobia and praise for Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944 on false grounds of their collaboration with the Nazis.

Anti-Zionism Camouflaged as Anti-Semitism

Anti-Zionism was fanned during the last two decades of the Soviet Union as a camouflaged form of anti-Semitism.[72] Anti-Semitism was deeply embedded in Russian nationalism which began to surface under Stalin and received official support during Brezhnev's leadership of the USSR in 1964–1982. This became an additional source of propaganda against "fascist Ukrainians"[73] who were allegedly collaborating with anti-Soviet Zionists and Israeli secret services. Such themes have been revived in Russian information warfare and disinformation, making unsubstantiated claims that Ukrainian leaders, such as former President Poroshenko, are Jews pretending to be Ukrainians.[74]

Moscow finds it difficult to reconcile the fact that Ukraine's Russian speaking Jews supported the Euromaidan Revolution and have backed Kyiv in Russia's war against Ukraine.[75] Russia has become even more confused by Jewish-Ukrainian President Zelenskyi, as his election contradicts the narrative of a "fascist Ukraine." In fact, in summer 2019, Ukraine was the only country outside Israel with a Jewish President (Zelenskyi) and Jewish Prime Minister (Volodymyr Hroisman).

Claiming that Ukrainian nationalists and "fascists" are in cahoots with Jewish Zionists was a Soviet favorite which has been revived by Russian information warfare. Two years after Russian disinformation claimed that Ukraine was politically and economically

tvs-targets-this-week-ukraine-poland-and-the-us-as-antiheroes/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

72 Kuzio, *Putin's War Against Ukraine*, 118–40.

73 Taras Kuzio, "The Soviet Roots of Anti-Fascism and Anti-Semitism," *New Eastern Europe* 6, no. XXIV (2016): 93–100.

74 Kuzio, *Putin's War Against Ukraine*, 118–40.

75 Lubomyr Y. Luciuk, ed., *Jews, Ukrainians, and the Euromaidan* (Toronto, ON: Kashtan Press, 2014).

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run by Jews,[76] a bizarre Russian nationalist attempt to explain Zelenskyi's election was written by Sergei Glazyev, one of Putin's senior advisers on Ukraine and one of the architects of the 2014 failed Novorossiia project. Writing in the Russian nationalist newspaper *Zavtra*, Glazyev claims:

> Perhaps the [U.S.] stake on Zelenskii, made long before these elections, is connected with the general alliance of the Trump administration with far-right forces in Israel. Probably, they will set new tasks for the renewed Kyiv regime. I do not exclude, for example, the possibility of a massive "clear out" of the Russian population from the South-Eastern lands of Ukraine by the inhabitants of the Promised Land who are tired of permanent war in the Middle East—just like the Christians fleeing from Islamizing Europe.[77]

Glazyev's anti-Semitism draws on Soviet era anti-Zionism that had high support within the national Bolshevik wing of the Soviet Communist Party, the Soviet military, and the KGB. As seen in this quotation from Glazyev's article, national Bolsheviks strongly believe in Western conspiracies against Russia. Glazyev was a leading member of the pro-Putin *Rodina* (Motherland) party that espoused national Bolshevism (a curious blend of Russian nationalism and Soviet communism), Stalinism, anti-Semitism (anti-Zionism), and even racism. *Zavtra* is a leading publication of those holding national Bolshevik views. Its editor Aleksandr Prokhanov supported the August 1991 hard-line coup against Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and the September 1993 national Bolshevik coup attempt against President Boris Yeltsyn. After the latter failed, Prokhanov's then newspaper *Den* was closed down. Its successor—*Zavtra*—was a major mobilizer for "White" (pro-Tsarist), "Red" (pro-Soviet), and "Brown" (fascist) Russian nationalists, travelling to join Donbas separatists and assist pro-Russian uprisings in the 2014 Novorossiia project.[78]

76 See a summary of an article published in 2017: "Disinfo: Ukraine Is Controlled Politically and Economically by the Jews (Summary)," *EU vs Disinfo*, 17 July 2017, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/ukraine-is-controlled-politically-and-economically-by-the-jews-and/ (accessed 22 May 2020).

77 Glazyev, "Okkupatsiia."

78 Marlene Laruelle, "The Three Colors of Novorossiya, or the Russian Nationalist Mythmaking of the Ukrainian Crisis," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32, no.1 (2016): 55–74.

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Ukrainian Nationalists as Puppets of the West

Promoting an image of a country that lacks sovereignty, Russian propagandists hold that the outcome of Ukrainian elections is typically determined by the West. They claim that Ukraine is controlled by the United States and Europe and "lives off their money and has *de facto* ceased to exist."[79] Analyzing this theme in the Russian media, the *EU Disinformation Review* concludes that "[t]he disinformation messages about the Western orchestration of Ukrainian politics starting with the Euromaidan have become a staple of pro-Kremlin media. Now, they are urgently recycled in the run-up to the election. All this to support a larger narrative that the democratic choice of the people is an illusion, and to question the sovereignty of Ukraine."[80]

Russia's information warfare and disinformation targeted the legitimacy of Ukraine's 2019 elections aiming to sow distrust in the democratic process and show that nothing was functioning because Ukraine is a failed state ruled by Washington.[81] The EU disinformation unit analyzed nearly ten million posts on the Russian social network *VKontakte* which showed widespread negative coverage about President Poroshenko. They found that 68 percent of messages about Poroshenko on *VKontakte* were strongly negative and derogatory, labelling him a "Russophobe," "bloody Ukrainian confectioner," "worst president," "chocolate Fuehrer," and the like.[82]

Ukraine as an Artificial Construct

Russian information warfare and disinformation have repeatedly promoted Ukraine as an artificial creation and a failed state that is not wanted in Europe. Russian political technologists claim that

79 "Fatal Distraction," *Disinformation Review*, 14 March 2019, https://mailchi.mp/euvsdisinfo/dr140-881205?e=16eb39ac8e (accessed 18 May 2020).

80 "Fatal Distraction."

81 Pavel Felgenhauer, "Moscow Hopes Ukrainian President Poroshenko Will Finally Be Ousted," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 16, no. 48, 4 April 2019, published by the Jamestown Foundation, https://jamestown.org/program/moscow-hopes-ukrainian-president-poroshenko-will-finally-be-ousted/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

82 "Figure of the Week: 68," *EU vs Disinfo*, 2 April 2019, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/figure-of-the-week-68/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

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Ukraine can only exist under Russian leadership, and its borders are illegitimate.[83] Bombastic statements such as "There is no Ukraine" and Ukraine "cannot be regarded as a serious state" are routinely heard on Russian TV.

Surkov, for instance, reiterated the same sentiment, adding that "[t]here is [ethnographic] Ukrainianism. In other words, a specific disorder of the mind, a sudden passion for ethnography. […] It's a muddle instead of a state. There is borshch, Bandera, and bandura. But there is no nation. There is a pamphlet entitled "Independent Ukraine" (*Samostiina Ukraina*), but there is no Ukraine. The only question is this,—is Ukraine already gone, or is there still no Ukraine?"[84]

These chauvinistic views employed by Russian information warfare draw on Tsarist and White émigré Russian nationalist tropes of Ukraine and Ukrainians. Russian nationalistic views of Ukraine and Ukrainians are found in all aspects of Russian media, especially television which is tightly controlled by the state. State TV "Pervyi Kanal" host and Deputy Speaker of the State Duma Piotr Tolstoy heads a weekly show which he uses to lambast Ukraine as an artificial country, its borders as being artificial, and Ukrainians who are really "Russians."[85] Ukraine is not a country but a mere territory, a weak state with limited sovereignty and an "unformed nation" that is simply a "southern branch of the Russian people." It is a state "built on lies" and it cannot even control its own borders.[86]

83 "How to Become a Stateless Nationalist," *EU vs Disinfo*, 18 October 2018, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/become-stateless-nationalist/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

84 Aleksei Chesnakov's interview with Vladislav Surkov.

85 "Tolstoy's Resurrection."

86 Olena Churanova, "Russian Disinformation: Ukrainian NGO's on the Frontline," *UA: Ukraine Analytica*, no. 1 (2018): 59–66; also available at http://ukraine-analytica.org/wp-content/uploads/analytyka11-1.pdf (accessed 18 May 2020); Mariia Terentieva, "They Who Must Be Blamed for Watching the Tales: Russian Propaganda in Ukraine," *New Eastern Europe*, 5 January 2018, http://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/01/05/must-not-blamed-watching-tales-russian-propaganda-ukraine/ (accessed 18 May 2020); "Russian State TV's Targets This Week."

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Dehumanization of Ukrainians

Russia's use of denigrating language represents "communication as a hybrid form of aggression." This strategy is a part of a broader form of military aggression which can be best described as "Belittle, Ridicule, and Dehumanize."[87]

Russian rhetoric surrounding military and political confrontations has been accompanied by denigration of Ukraine and Ukrainians. One example was poking fun at the size of Ukraine's navy during the crisis in the Azov Sea in late 2018. Piotr Tolstoy, a longtime Russian chauvinist toward Ukraine, told his audience: "This week, we learned two important things. The first. Ukraine, it turns out, has a navy. More precisely—it used to have a navy, but lost a third of it, but more on that later …" On the "Rossiya 1" channel, Dmitrii Kiseliov repeated similar chauvinistic remarks: "Our border guards coped brilliantly with the task. As a result, everyone is alive, and now almost a third of the active Ukrainian fleet is kept under arrest in [the Russian port of] Kerch. Ridiculous. Although it did create a lot of noise."[88]

Russian propagandists have gone far beyond ridiculing and accusing Ukrainians of being "fascists," claiming that those Ukrainians who fight in the Donbas are "illegal international mercenary bandits" who eat children and rape women. Russia's dehumanization campaign is spread and republished by major Russian and some international outlets.[89]

Spreading Disillusionment in Reforms and European Integration

As mentioned earlier, it has been symptomatic of Russian propagandists to characterize the Orange and Euromaidan Revolutions as anti-Russian conspiracies, working in the interests of the West to

87 "Denigrating Ukraine with Disinformation," *EU vs Disinfo*, 10 December 2018, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/denigrating-ukraine-with-disinformation/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

88 "Denigrating Ukraine with Disinformation."

89 See an interview of a Ukrainian commander, fighting in the Donbas in Seth J. Frantzman, "War in Ukraine: The Hidden Conflict," *The Jerusalem Post*, 2 September 2017, https://www.jpost.com/jerusalem-report/war-in-ukraine-the-hidden-conflict-503108 (accessed 18 May 2020).

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undermine Russia in what it considers to be its exclusive Eurasian sphere of influence. The "Ukraine as an artificial creation" theme is developed as a means to emphasize that Ukraine is incapable of introducing reforms. Russian media extensively covers the topic of corruption and oligarchs in Ukraine to show that despite revolutions nothing changes for the better.

Russian information warfare seeks to influence Western audiences, attempting to persuade them that supporting Ukraine and its reforms is not worth the effort.[90] Russia's goals are to create an environment whereby Ukraine, abandoned by Europe, will eventually accept the Kremlin's "peace plans" in the Donbas, accept it is part of the Russian World and Moscow's sphere of influence. Ukraine's European integration is routinely attacked as a myth that brings no benefits to Ukrainians. One example is the claim that, using the visa-free regime, ten million Ukrainians have fled from Ukraine to the EU where they have been enslaved and forced to work for food.

Importantly, Russia promotes disillusionment in reforms and European integration to turn Russians away from seeking similar democratic changes in the Russian Federation. The example of Ukraine and its democratic changes is ideologically harmful and potential contagion into Russia. Denigrating Ukrainian reforms is central to Russia's messaging in order to make Russians believe that it is pointless to seek change. A vivid example of this was an interview with an allegedly disappointed Ukrainian, broadcast by Russian state TV, who was not a Ukrainian citizen but a Belarusian actor.[91]

More recently, Russia's disinformation campaign uses the spread of COVID-19 to undermine Ukrainian democracy, illuminating the failure of health reforms and European integration in Ukraine. Russian media is eager to provide evidence of a "civil

90 "Ukraine under Information Fire," *EU vs Disinfo*, 7 January 2019, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/ukraine-under-information-fire/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

91 "Russian State TV Broadcasts Staged Interview," *EU vs Disinfo*, 17 December 2018, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/russian-state-tv-broadcasts-staged-interview/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

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war" taking place in Ukraine where Ukrainians are violently attacking other Ukrainians. Fake letters from Ukraine's Ministry of Health falsely claimed that there were five cases of coronavirus in Ukraine. This was coupled with Russian disinformation highlighting violent riots by those who allegedly protested against the arrival of Ukrainian evacuees from the city of Wuhan in China.[92]

Analyzing Russia's information warfare, the *EU Disinformation Review* concluded that "[h]aving portrayed Ukraine as Nazi and Russophobic for years, the pro-Kremlin media jumped at the opportunity to tie it all together, claiming that Ukrainians' hatred towards Russians has now turned against their own people and that Ukrainians think like Nazis and adhere to Nazi principles that the sick must be destroyed."[93] Russian information warfare attempts to draw parallels between protests during the Euromaidan and the coronavirus pandemic to once again portray the Ukrainians as a violent nation with "fascist" inclinations. Such messages can go viral in social media, creating an international image of Ukraine as a threat to European civilization.[94]

Diverting Blame from Russia

Despite substantial evidence to the contrary,[95] Russia has always portrayed the war in Ukraine as a "civil war."[96] Yet 63 percent of Ukrainians believe that Ukraine and Russia are at war, or Ukraine is fighting Russia-backed separatists; only 14 percent believe in the

92 "Violence Greets Wuhan Evacuees upon Arrival in Ukrainian Town," *Radio Free Europe*, 21 February 2020, https://www.rferl.org/a/ukrainian-villagers-protest-wuhan-evacuees-arrival/30446503.html (accessed 18 May 2020).

93 "Consequence of Disinformation," *EU vs Disinfo*, 27 February 2020, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/consequences-of-disinformation/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

94 "Consequence of Disinformation."

95 A Russian video of a FSB sniper unit operating in the Donbas was captured by Ukraine and can be viewed at: https://www.rferl.org/a/video-purportedly-shows-russian-snipers-in-ukraine/30624198.html (accessed 21 May 2020).

96 Vynohradov, "'Nedostrana' i 'grazhdanskaia voina;'" Tymofil Brik, "'Civil War' and Other Clichés: Why Is It Important to Study Terminology, Context, and Data?" *Vox Ukraine*, 20 February 2019, https://voxukraine.org/en/civil-war-and-other-cliches-why-is-it-important-to-study-terminology-context-and-data/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

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Russian "civil war" scenario.[97] The purpose is to hide Russia's ongoing military intervention from Russian citizens and to lobby Ukrainians to negotiate directly with DNR and LNR separatist leaders. Although the Kremlin's disinformation about Russia's military intervention in Ukraine has been accepted in Russian public opinion, Russia has been unable to convince Western governments, NATO, the EU, and the Council of Europe that it is not militarily involved in Ukraine.[98] Nevertheless, some Western academics and journalists promote the Kremlin's myth of a "civil war" taking place in Ukraine.[99]

Similarly, with a trial opening in the Netherlands in March 2020, none of Russia's myriad of lies have convinced Western governments that it did not supply the BUK that shot down MH17. Evidence of Russian forces shooting down MH17 is irrefutable.

In May 2019, Ukraine won its case against Russia in the UN International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea over Russia's piracy seven months earlier in the Azov Sea.[100] Russia sought to blame Ukraine for naval tensions in the Azov Sea in November 2018 when it seized three vessels and 25 crew and security forces. Ukraine was portrayed by Russia as a Western fifth column, taking orders from Washington to adopt an aggressive stance against Russia.[101] President Poroshenko and the United States allegedly jointly planned the Azov Sea "provocation."

97 "Hromadska dumka pro sytuatsiiu na Donbasi," *Razumkov Tsentr*, 26 February 2020, http://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/gromadska-dumka-pro-sytuatsiiu-na-donbasi-ta-shliakhy-vidnovlennia-suverenitetu-ukrainy-nad-okupovanymy-terytoriiamy-liutyi-2020r (accessed 18 May 2020).

98 Andrew Wilson, "The Donbas in 2014: Explaining Civil Conflict Perhaps, but Not Civil War," *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 4 (2016): 631–52.

99 Taras Kuzio, "Euromaidan Revolution, Crimea and Russia-Ukraine War: Why it is Time for a Review of Ukrainian-Russian Studies," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 59, no. 3–4 (2018): 529–53; and "Russia–Ukraine Crisis: The Blame Game, Geopolitics and National Identity," *Europe-Asia Studies* 70, no. 3 (2018): 462–73.

100 "U.N. Maritime Tribunal Rules Russia Must Release Ukrainian Sailors, Ships," *Radio Free Europe*, 25 May 2019, https://www.rferl.org/a/un-tribunal-sea-ukraine-russia-ship-seized/29962293.html (accessed 18 May 2020).

101 "Russia's Long-Term Disinformation Plan for the Azov Sea," *Euromaidan Press*, 12 December 2018, http://euromaidanpress.com/2018/12/12/russias-long-term-disinformation-plan-for-the-azov-sea/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

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Russia's disinformation about the Azov Sea included a number of messages.[102] The Russians claimed that Kyiv sacrificed Ukrainian sailors in order to receive more funding from its Western sponsors. The West allegedly planned for Ukraine to seize Russian vessels in order to fill the Azov Sea with Ukrainian blood. According to the Russians, their intervention prevented the Third World War by stopping the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) transporting a NATO-supplied nuclear device to destroy the new bridge, linking the Northern Caucasus and Crimea.[103] Ukrainian vessels entered territorial waters that belonged to Russia prior to Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Although the vessels seized by Russia were donated by the United States, Ukraine's provocation aimed to derail the Trump-Putin summit. Russia boldly claimed that the West did not know where the Azov Sea was and, generally speaking, it did not care about it.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated continuities between Soviet and Russian information warfare and disinformation through the integration of Tsarist and White émigré nationalist ideas and strategies into their arsenal. This integration is particularly visible when studying Russian attitudes toward Ukraine and Ukrainians. Russia's remarkable return to Tsarist and White émigré views of Ukraine as an artificial creation, and of Ukrainians as a branch of the Russian people exemplifies an ideological regression of Russian society, revealing the military and strategic objectives of the Russian Federation.

As we have seen, the views about Ukraine and Ukrainians in contemporary Russia have been shaped by its cultural and political traditions, and they serve as the impetus behind Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. Yet, despite the traceable continuities

102 "Russia's Long-Term Disinformation Plan for the Azov Sea."

103 "Ukraine and U.K. Conspired to Destroy the Crimean Bridge Using a NATO Portable Nuclear Device," *EU vs Disinfo*, 26 November 2018, https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/nato-conspired-to-destroy-the-crimean-bridge-using-nuclear-land-mines/ (accessed 18 May 2020).

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of Russian traditions and worldviews, the ideological clash between Russians and Ukrainians and the protracted Russian-Ukrainian war in the Donbas are also the result of Russia's cultural realignment under Putin. The novelty of this realignment rests neither in Putin's authoritarian patterns of governing nor in disinformation that the Russian regime spreads. Authoritarianism and disinformation are old and familiar concepts for the Russians. Rather it is the ease with which disinformation can be spread on social media.[104] Putin's disinformation machine has taken Soviet expertise and its ideological motifs and given them greater power through the use of social media and the Internet. These new communication patterns amplify the effects of the Russian disinformation campaign in Ukraine, extending these effects far beyond the borders of Russia and Ukraine.

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104 Richard Stengel, *Information Wars: How We Lost the Global Battle against Disinformation & What We Can Do About It* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press), 13.

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Russian Active Measures against Ukraine (2004) and Estonia (2007)

Jonas J. Driedger

The ongoing politicization of Russia's role in the U.S. presidential elections highlights how Russian covert operations and disinformation campaigns continue to be a major source of concern in the West. Russian covert operations preceded the annexation of Crimea and signaled Russia's support for separatists in eastern Ukraine in 2014. Russia also conducted a series of covert operations in Georgia before the two countries clashed in 2008. Following these prominent events, scholars sought to conceptualize, understand, and assess these operations, that, falling somewhere between military and covert action, were instantly identified as "hybrid."[1] Various definitions have been employed, ranging from "war" and "doctrine" to "interference" and "incursions," but with little scholarly consensus. There have also been preliminary attempts to conceptualize these Russian actions as "active measures," making use of concepts borrowed from the Soviet Union.[2] Less attention has been paid to how Russia has used active measures under the leadership of Vladimir

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2 Steve Abrams, "Beyond Propaganda: Soviet Active Measures in Putin's Russia," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 15, no. 1 (2016): 5–31; Thomas Rid, *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020).

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Putin before the aforementioned events. This approach might generate several questions: What were the sources of Russia's use of active measures? What means were used? Were they successful? Did they entail unintended consequences?

This study attempts to answer these questions by investigating two of the most far-reaching cases of Russian active measures in the early years of Putin's reign and assessing their respective sources, methods, and consequences. The definition of active measures as an interstate covert action informs this research. The state conducting secret operations typically a) denies its responsibility for their implementation; b) uses means considered illegitimate by international law and norms; and c) seeks to influence the target state's political decisions or capabilities in its favor. Examples include espionage, false-flag operations, cyberattacks, covert propaganda activities, and the use of paramilitary forces and ununiformed combatants in "hybrid" operations.

No single account has yet been brought forward to comprehensively assess and explain Russian active measures after the Cold War. Although certain testable propositions have gained wide traction among journalists, policymakers, and the scholarly community, none of them amount to a coherent account about the nature, causes, and effects of Russian active measures. Nonetheless, their shared implicit assumptions and explicit claims might serve as a hypothetical baseline to identify and assess relevant evidence.

Russian active measures are usually seen as instruments to achieve distinct and pre-existing goals. Analysts differ over what these goals are. Some argue that Russia simply strives for maximum military security and power in its neighborhood.[3] Others see

3 See, for example, John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (1990): 5–56; John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, 18 August 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault (accessed 9 April 2020); Elias Götz, "It's Geopolitics, Stupid: Explaining Russia's Ukraine Policy," *Global Affairs* 1, no. 1 (2015): 3–10; Elias Götz, "Putin, the State, and War: The Causes of Russia's Near Abroad Assertion Revisited," *International Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (2017): 228–53, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viw009. Parts of Richard Sakwa's argument

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Russia's foreign conduct as determined by its dominant ideology, shaping Russia's political status as a regional cultural hegemon and an equal to the other great powers in the world.[4] The goal of Russian active measures should hence be to alleviate strategic and/or ideological concerns and threats, to promote the state's goals, or to create an opportunity for advancing them.

If these views are correct, the methods, context, and timing of Russian active measures should reveal these strategic or ideological concerns. Active measures promise to be more effective than overt and legal measures, but also more risky and costly than overt coercive tactics. Therefore, the very use of active measures should be designed to either directly defend or hijack ideological or strategic pillars and values of the target state, or to do so indirectly by signaling to the target state and others that they will be punished should they go against these goals.[5] Furthermore, the measures should be implemented to minimize negative consequences for the purported strategic or ideological goals. Lastly, in terms of consequences, Russian active measures should either bring about these goals, or the context should give clues that unforeseen factors had intervened and prevented the desired outcomes.

This study focuses on Russian interference in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections and Russian cyberattacks on Estonian servers in 2007 to demonstrate that these views do not adequately account for the actual sources, methods, and consequences of Rus-

follow the same logic: see Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

4 For example Anne L. Clunan, "Historical Aspirations and the Domestic Politics of Russia's Pursuit of International Status," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47, no. 3 (2014): 281–90; Iver B. Neumann, "Status Is Cultural: Durkheimian Poles and Weberian Russians Seek Great-Power Status," in *Status in World Politics*, eds. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William Curti Wohlforth, 1st ed. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 85–112; Reinhard Wolf, "Taking Interaction Seriously: Asymmetrical Roles and the Behavioral Foundations of Status," *European Journal of International Relations*, 4 April 2019, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066119837338.

5 On coercive and semi-covert signaling, see Todd S. Sechser, "Reputations and Signaling in Coercive Bargaining," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 7 June 2016, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022002716652687 (accessed 9 April 2020); Bowen, "Coercive Diplomacy and the Donbas."

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sian active measures in the pre-2008 period. Two considerations inspired this case selection. First, the two cases have received less scholarly attention than the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 and the Russo-Ukrainian conflict since 2014. These cases feature largely unused, yet relevant, data that help analyze Russian active measures carried out by Putin's autocratic regime. Second, the cases in question illuminate a wide range of active measures and different contexts in which they were carried out, enabling an analysis of their sources, methods, and consequences.

In both cases, Russian elites used ideological narratives to advance Russia's foreign policy goals. For example, in Estonia, the covert use of active measures went hand in hand with Russian officials and politicians bemoaning "Russophobia" in the target countries and invoking Russia's duty to "protect compatriots abroad." However, the data suggests that Russian elites did not genuinely believe these ideological proclamations. Rather, the underlying goal of their strategies and active measures seems to have been to increase support for the Russian regime in the target states and pressure them to accommodate Russia's strategic interests.

The evidence suggests that Russian active measures emerged as a result of short-term political interactions, rather than being a product of long-term strategic planning and prioritization. In addition, this study argues that Russia largely failed to achieve its apparent goal of getting Estonia and Ukraine to comply with its wishes. Rather, both countries' elites identified Russia as being responsible for the active measures, increasingly perceived Russia as a threat to national security, and designed future policies to counter this threat. Although there is clear evidence for Russia's military-strategic considerations in the Ukrainian case, the Estonian case does not neatly dovetail in a similar scenario.

The next two sections closely examine the Ukrainian and Estonian cases, followed by a comparative analysis and an overall assessment of the sources, methods, and consequences of Russian active measures in both cases. The study concludes with a brief discussion of the broader implications of the findings.

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Russian Interference in the 2004 Ukrainian Presidential Elections

Sources

The evidence indicates that Russian active measures were employed to sway the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections and bring to power a candidate who would be dependent on Moscow and compliant with its guidelines. These operations were also designed to signal to sympathetic parts of Ukrainian society, including its ethnically Russian population, that Russia remained determined to maintain close ties with Ukraine, albeit on its own terms.

In 2004, the Ukrainian opposition bloc "Our Ukraine," led by Viktor Yushchenko, ran against Viktor Yanukovych, leader of the Party of Regions. Yushchenko campaigned for a firm Westernization of Ukraine, while Yanukovych emphasized the importance of good relations with Russia. During the election campaign, Yanukovych had been backed by outgoing President Leonid Kuchma as well as by Russia.

International observers stated that the initial election campaign was unfairly skewed toward Yanukovych due to massive media support, funding, and use of "administrative resources." Neither of the two main candidates were able to secure an absolute majority of votes on 31 October 2004. Consequently, a second round was held on 21 November 2004. Independent surveys saw Yushchenko as the winner. Nevertheless, Yanukovych claimed victory, even though international as well as independent national monitors stated that the poll did not meet democratic standards. Because of the apparent election fraud, the opposition initiated large protests and mass demonstrations in several cities. Government buildings were occupied in the capital of Kyiv.[6] After a flurry of negotiations

6 Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), passim; Katja Wezel, "Ukraine (Opposition)," in *Conflict Barometer 2004*, ed. HIIK—Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (Heidelberg, Germany: The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2004), 14.

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involving the EU,[7] Yushchenko was finally declared the winner. So what was the design of Russian covert and overt operations that were supposed to help Yanukovych win?

Methods

Russian support of Yanukovych took many forms, some of which were legitimate and overt. Putin campaigned extensively for Yanukovych, as did the Russian media. Russophones, a substantial portion of Ukrainian citizens, were reached through Russian TV programs broadcast in Ukraine. To court the considerable Ukrainian diaspora residing in Russia, pro-Yanukovych street-signs appeared in Moscow, tipping popular support in his favor.[8]

Russia also provided government-to-government support to secure a successful outcome for Yanukovych who was Prime Minister of Ukraine at the time. During the Russian-Ukrainian summit in Sochi in August 2004, Putin agreed to remove a value-added-tax on oil exports to Ukraine, effectively making Ukrainian petroleum 16 percent cheaper. This cost Russia about 800 million dollars. Furthermore, despite oil prices rising over 50 dollars per barrel, Russian suppliers held Ukrainian prices constant until the elections.[9] Russia also announced that as of 1 November, Ukrainians would be allowed to stay in Russia for up to ninety days without registering, and, from January 2005, they would be granted freedom of entry with domestic documents only.[10]

However, in concert and coordination with these overt and legitimate measures, Russia also employed a series of active measures against Ukraine which were clearly intended to sway the election. There is ample evidence to suggest that Russian active measures can be divided into three categories: 1) provision of political consultants and "fixers;" 2) covert financial support; and 3) the use of formally non-political institutions for propaganda.

7 Anna-Sophie Maass, *EU-Russia Relations, 1999–2015: From Courtship to Confrontation* (London, U.K.: Routledge, 2017), 188–96.
8 Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, 94–95, 110.
9 Ibid., 89.
10 Ibid., 89–90.

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The first category of active measures included the infiltration of operatives into the elections. Moscow mobilized an army of "political technologists" (a broad East European notion that includes spin-doctors, political strategists, criminals, and consultants) whose advice, networking, and "analytical texts" were designed to promote Yanukovych and weaken Yushchenko.[11] These individuals maintained extensive and largely covert communications with Russian elite circles, having access to the Russian Presidential Administration.[12] The most prominent was Gleb Pavlovskii, president of the Moscow Foundation for Effective Politics (FEP) who worked in Ukraine under a "Russia-based" contract.[13] He had been a key figure in organizing the transition of power from Boris Yeltsin to Putin.[14] According to a leaked report, allegedly drawn by the Russian political technologist and a co-founder of FEP Marat Gelman, Pavlovskii and people like him developed a strategy of identity polarization, emphasizing and amplifying the differences between the western and eastern parts of Ukraine.[15] This strategy also included bolstering "nationalists" who sought to associate themselves with Yushchenko, to make him appear chauvinistic and even fascistic.[16]

The second category of active measures involved strategies that helped organize covert financial support for the Yanukovych campaign.[17] The most crucial piece of evidence for this massive financial support comes from a leaked tape recording of a meeting between Viktor Medvedchuk, head of President Leonid Kuchma's presidential administration from 2002 to January 2005, and Aleksandr Voloshin, Putin's close advisor. In the tape, the costs of the Yanukovych campaigns were put at approximately 600 million dollars, with the cost divided evenly between Russian sources (mainly

11 Ibid., 86–104.
12 Ibid., 86–93.
13 Ibid., 87.
14 Ibid., 175. After the events, Pavlovskii stated that if Yeltsin would have conducted himself in 1999 like Kuchma in 2004, then Moscow would have "boiled over" in October 1999, and Putin would not have become president.
15 Ibid., 90.
16 Ibid., 86–104.
17 Ibid., 118–21.

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via the state-controlled energy giant Gazprom) and Ukrainian ones (mainly by the Ukrainian oligarch Rinat Akhmetov).[18]

The third category included support by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) that held many parishes in Ukraine with substantial influence on Ukrainian adherents to Russian Orthodox Christianity. The Russian Patriarch Aleksei II and the Metropolitan of the pro-Russian Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOCMP) Volodymyr (Sabodan) both blessed Yanukovych before the elections, with Volodymyr explicitly and publicly endorsing Yanukovych: "I view him [Yanukovych] as a true Orthodox believer, who would deserve to be the head of our state."[19] In Russian Orthodox churches in Ukraine, anti-Yushchenko propaganda leaflets were spread. The sermons were politicized in favor of Yanukovych who was allowed to have his name on church leaflets sending greetings from him and the Archangel Gabriel.[20]

Beyond these measures, some sources suggest that Russia also used targeted violence to sway the elections. Amidst the election campaign, Yushchenko was poisoned. Yushchenko's former chief of staff, Oleh Rybachuk, claimed he was told by sources in Ukrainian and Russian security services that, already in late July 2004, there were plans to eliminate Yushchenko. The poisoning most likely happened at a secret dinner that Yushchenko held with the head of the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) Ihor Smeshko, his

18 Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*, 4th ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 326. According to some (opposition) estimates, the Yanukovych campaign spent 600 million dollars, which is nearly the combined costs of the Bush and Kerry campaigns in the 2004 U.S. presidential elections. These estimates included a 200 million dollar payment from Gazprom, channeled through Russian and Ukrainian subsidiaries. A Russian magazine put this figure at 900 million dollars. Surkov personally approved 50 million dollars. Another source offered an estimate of 95 million dollars only for the second round; most sources mentioned 50 million dollars, with the Kremlin deterring Russian oligarchs sympathetic to Yushchenko (i.e., Alfa Group's Mikhail Fridman and the industrial magnate Oleg Deripaska) from supporting him. See Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, 118.

19 Oleg Varfolomeyev, "Yanukovych has Moscow Patriarchate on His Side," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 1, no. 127, 15 November 2004, *Jamestown Foundation*, https://jamestown.org/program/yanukovych-has-moscow-patriarchate-on-his-side/ (accessed 8 May 2020).

20 Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, 92–93.

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deputy Volodymyr Satsiuk, and "Our Ukraine" supporter Davyd Zhvaniia at Satsiuk's dacha.[21] According to the Prague-based analyst Roman Kupchinsky, Mr. Satsiuk was a former KGB officer who had been appointed deputy head of the SBU at the insistence of Viktor Medvedchuk, the head of the Kuchma administration.[22] Kupchinksy's analysis also shed light on the SBU's illegal activities designed to help Yanukovych win and an internal struggle within the SBU because of Smeshko's appointment in September 2003.[23] Kupchinksy wrote that

Mr. Smeshko, the former head of the Ukrainian military intelligence service (GRU), had served as Ukraine's first military attaché in Washington in 1992–1996. Some of the SBU officers interviewed claimed that Mr. Smeshko had been recruited to work for the U.S. government at that time. Mr. Smeshko has not responded to these charges.

> Other SBU officers interviewed by RFE/RL rejected these views as 'disinformation' and part of a 'conspiracy theory.' They insist that Mr. Smeshko was resented for his connection to the GRU, a traditional rival of the former KGB. These officers claim that Mr. Smeshko merely saw the writing on the wall and switched loyalties to the Yushchenko camp in order to preserve his position in the SBU.[24]

All in all, the available information suggests a link between the Russian secret services and Yushchenko's poisoning, even though it is far from conclusive or precise. Yushchenko seemed to have been the target of another operation that might have originated in Moscow. On the eve of the second election round, a car with explosives was discovered outside Yushchenko's headquarters. Allegedly the two Russian male drivers travelled on false passports, and claimed that Moscow officials had offered them 200,000 dollars to murder Yushchenko.[25] However, the identity of these individuals, as well as the details of the subsequent investigation of this incident, remain unclear.

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21 Ibid., 97–98. According to Wilson, the poison was likely administered by Satsiuk.

22 Roman Kupchinsky, "Reining in the Security Service of Ukraine: RFE/RL Belarus and Ukraine Report," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, no. 11, March 13, 2005, http://www.ukrweekly.com/old/archive/2005/110505.shtml (accessed 8 May 2020).

23 Kupchinsky, "Reining in the Security Service of Ukraine."

24 Ibid.; see also Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, 97–98.

25 Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, 100.

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Consequences

Russian active measures failed to sway the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections: a Russia-friendly candidate did not win; Ukraine drifted away from Russia; and Ukraine's ties with the West were strengthened.

In the aftermath of the election victory and Russia's aggressive, albeit failed active measures, the Ukrainian security elite reevaluated Russia's policies, intentions, and capabilities. They were increasingly perceived as a serious threat to Ukraine's national security.[26] These perceptions are evident when one examines statements, documents, and decisions, emanating from the Ukrainian security and political elite.

First, in February 2005, newly appointed Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs Yurii Lutsenko publicly announced that he knew precisely "who brought the poison across the Ukrainian border, which official took it to the scene of the crime, and who personally put it into Yushchenko's food,"[27] pointing a finger at Russia's involvement in Yushchenko's assassination. Although in the 2019 interview with Dmytro Gordon, the former General-Prosecutor Lutsenko slightly changed his story, he remained adamant that Yushchenko was poisoned.[28]

Second, Ukraine's foundational security documents also imply that the Ukrainian elites viewed Russia as a threat. On 12 February 2007, the Yushchenko administration adopted the law No.

26 Leonid Polyakov, "Ukraine," in *The Handbook of European Defence Policies and Armed Forces*, eds. Hugo Meijer and Marco Wyss, vol. 1 (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2018), 185.

27 Boris Volodarsky, "The KGB's Poison Factory," *Wall Street Journal*, 7 April 2005, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB111282082770699984 (accessed 11 May 2020). The *Wall Street Journal* interviewed the former Soviet intelligence officer who argued that the substance that was used in Yushchenko's assassination could have been manufactured in a KGB research institute known as "Kamera" (the cell) or the "Laboratory no. 12." Yushchenko's symptoms resembled that of potentially provoked by the substance produced by the Kamera. See also Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, 100.

28 See Dmytro Gordon's interview with Yurii Lutsenko, *Gordon*, 22 January 2019, https://gordonua.com/publications/lucenko-yanukovich-mne-skazal-sho-ty-suka-znaesh-pro-chifir-takie-kak-ty-u-menya-na-lagere-sopli-mertvyakov-sosali-678296.html (accessed 10 May 2020).

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05/2007 "On the National Security Strategy of Ukraine." The document states that the Orange Revolution had opened opportunities for "carrying out a sovereign foreign policy" which, by implication, was deemed to have not been sovereign before. Similarly implying Russia's past interference, the third chapter on "Strategic Goals, Priorities, and Tasks of National Security Policy," accords priority to the "achievement of national unity and consolidation of society by overcoming both objective and artificial contradictions of socio-cultural, confessional, ethnic, linguistic, interregional and regional character on the basis of unconditional compliance with constitutional guarantees of human and civil rights and freedoms."[29]

Third, on 26 November 2008, after the Russo-Georgian war that took place in August 2008, Ukrainian Defense Minister Yurii Yekhanurov announced plans to deploy additional air force and air defense units toward the Russian border to be prepared for Russian military operations like those against Georgia.[30]

In line with this perception of Russia as a threat to Ukraine, Kyiv enacted a series of countermeasures in order to weaken Russian offensive capabilities, increase Ukrainian resilience, and deter future active measures and aggression. These countermeasures were prominent in four realms.

First, to balance and contain the Russian threat, Ukraine pushed for close ties with Western military powers, the EU and NATO. Immediately after his electoral victory, Yushchenko declared that he wanted Ukraine to be "integrated into both the EU and NATO" and called for military reforms to enable that process, leading to an all-professional armed forces by 2010.[31] In Ukraine's Military Doctrine of 2005, Ukraine renounced its military nonalignment status, later reinforced by the aforementioned document on Ukraine's National Security Strategy of 2007 and the relevant

29 "Ukaz Prezydenta Ukrainy No. 105/2007 Pro Stratehiiu natsionalnoi bezpeky Ukrainy," *Rada natsionalnoi bezpeky i oborony Ukrainy*, 12 February 2007, http://old.rnbo.gov.ua/documents/104.html (accessed 10 May 2020).

30 Marius Gehrmann, "Russia—Ukraine," in *Conflict Barometer 2008*, ed. HIIK—Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (Heidelberg, Germany: Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2008), 22.

31 Christopher Langton, ed. (International Institute for Strategic Studies), *The Military Balance 2005* (London, U.K.: Routledge, 2005), 140.

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legislature.[32] In section 3.10 of the National Security Strategy, Ukraine reaffirmed its goals of EU and NATO accession.[33] In January 2008, only three months before the NATO Bucharest summit, Yushchenko officially requested a Membership Action Plan from the alliance.[34]

Second, Ukraine began to modernize its military to advance its deterrence and defense capabilities vis-à-vis Russia.[35] In the early 2000s, Ukraine's Armed Forces were in dire straits and, as an expert on the Ukrainian defense sector argued, their preparedness for a serious military contingency was "limited, at best."[36] Indeed, defense spending had fallen from 1.6 percent of GDP in 2001 to 1.36 percent of GDP in 2006. Yet, the 2006 defense budget demonstrated a massive funding increase from 5.5 billion Hryvna in 2005 to 14.8 billion Hryvna in 2006. This happened partly due to the inclusion of several items into the Ministry of Defense's budget that had previously appeared in the budgets of other ministries. Nevertheless, the increase indicates that Ukraine was undertaking serious efforts to improve its Armed Forces.[37] This was consistent with the strategic plans included in Ukraine's 2007 National Security Strategy. In section 4.2, funding for the security sector reform was given first priority. In section 3.7, Ukraine announced its goal of bringing the level of armaments and military equipment up to the standard of NATO national armed forces.[38]

Third, to increase its resilience against future Russian subversive operations, on 1 November 2008, the Ukrainian national broadcasting commission took several Russian TV channels off Ukrainian

32 Polyakov, "Ukraine," 185.
33 "Ukaz Prezydenta Ukrainy No. 105/2007."
34 Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 336.
35 Under the later Yanukovych presidency since 2010, the Ukrainian military was stripped of its resources and capabilities, performing poorly at the earlier 2014 stages of Russian aggression against Ukraine. See Polyakov, "Ukraine."
36 Polyakov, "Ukraine," 183.
37 Langton, *The Military Balance 2006*, 59.
38 "Ukaz Prezydenta Ukrainy No. 105/2007."

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airwaves. In response, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov demanded that the rights of Ukraine's Russian-speaking population should be respected.[39]

Fourth, Ukraine began to diplomatically assert itself against Russia. Kyiv publicly identified Russia's political regime as autocratic, and encouraged Russian society to aspire to democratic and liberal reforms. In February 2005, Yushchenko appointed Boris Nemtsov as his adviser.[40] A Russian citizen, Nemtsov had been a popular and influential politician under Yeltsin, serving as governor of the Nizhnii Novgorod region and Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, while pursuing pro-Western and liberal policies. After Putin's accession to power, Nemtsov became a vocal critic of his aggressive stance toward Russia's post-Soviet neighbors and brutal policies in Chechnya, and the installment of a "power vertical" in Russia.[41]

To weaken its offensive capabilities and curb Moscow's revisionist intentions, Ukraine opposed Russia's ambitions in the international realm. In April 2005, new Ukrainian Foreign Minister Borys Tarasiuk announced that a 1997 agreement, granting the Russian Black Sea Fleet basing rights in Sevastopol on the Crimean peninsula for twenty years, would most likely not be renewed in 2017.[42] This announcement aggravated Moscow, because, while Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Crimea was in disarray, it still held significant strategic value.[43]

39 Gehrmann, "Russia—Ukraine," 22.

40 Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, 178.

41 In 2014, Nemtsov sided with Ukraine, announcing that he would expose Russia's involvement in the war in the Donbas. In 2015, he was assassinated in close proximity to the Kremlin. For more details about Nemtsov's assassination, see John B. Dunlop, *The February 2015 Assassination of Boris Nemtsov and the Flawed Trial of His Alleged Killers: An Exploration of Russia's "Crime of the 21st Century"* (Stuttgart, Germany: ibidem-Verlag, 2019).

42 Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, 178.

43 On Russia's efforts and goals in the Black Sea Basin, see Dale A. Bertelsen and Olga Bertelsen, "Russian Hegemony in the Black Sea Basin: The 'Third Rome' in Contemporary Geopolitics," in *Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine: The Challenge of Change,* ed. Olga Bertelsen (Stuttgart, Germany: ibidem-Verlag/ Columbia University Press, 2017), 213–49.

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To further counter Russian goals, Ukraine formed alliances with Russia's other neighbors who pursued similar paths and shared similar problems vis-à-vis Russia. Ukraine developed a more assertive policy within the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, established by Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova in 2001 to safeguard against Russia. When the conflict between Russia and Georgia escalated into a full-blown war in August of 2008, President Yushchenko and the Ukrainian security elite expressed strong solidarity with Georgia and its President Mikheil Saakashvili.[44] In protest against Russia's military actions in Georgia, Yushchenko boycotted a meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States in October 2008. Later that month, Ukraine announced that it would not renew the lease contract of the Russian naval base in Sevastopol after 2017.[45]

Russia's evident use of active measures also drew some reprimands from the West. This was mainly due to Western concerns that the Russo-Ukrainian conflict could escalate further, and that Russia might use active measures against EU and NATO member states. This explains in part the positive response to Ukraine's initiatives and ambitions to become an EU and NATO member, albeit with some reservations. At the 21 April 2005 meeting in Vilnius, NATO extended the offer of an "Intensified Dialogue" on Ukraine's membership aspirations and the reforms necessary for potential membership. An elaborate "Programme for Armed Forces Reform and Development for the Period of 2006–2011" was initiated, and cooperation within the NATO Partnership for Peace Program intensified. Ukraine began to implement comprehensive military reforms consistent with the requirements for the official NATO Membership Action Plan, even though inclusion in said Plan was still being denied for Ukraine. In 2008, at the NATO Bucharest Summit, NATO formally declared that Ukraine (together with Georgia) would eventually become a member.[46]

44 Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 336–38.
45 Gehrmann, "Russia—Ukraine," 22.
46 Polyakov, "Ukraine," 185.

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Similarly, the EU signaled its support of Ukraine, although without offering Ukraine a membership perspective. The European Council endorsed a Joint EU-Ukraine Action Plan on 21 February 2005, and included Ukraine in the Eastern Partnership framework, launching negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with Ukraine in 2009.[47]

The Cyberattacks on Estonia in 2007

Sources

Russian active measures against Estonia occurred immediately after a clash between ethnic Russians and ethnic Estonians in Tallinn in 2007. They seem to have been designed to retaliate against the 10 January 2007 Estonian law, allowing the reburial of the remains of soldiers killed in the Second World War and the removal of a monument—the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn—from Tónismägi Park in Estonia's capital to the remote Defense Forces Cemetery.[48] About a third of Estonia's inhabitants are ethnically Russian, and this legislation intensified a preexisting conflict within Estonian society.[49] Most ethnic Russians, in and outside of Russia, perceive the struggle against Nazi Germany as a heroic deed of Soviet and Russian martyrs that saved the world from an evil and destructive force. For them, the Bronze Soldier symbolized the heroism of the Soviet Red Army. Hence, the removal of the monument was seen as an act dishonoring Soviet soldiers and as an offense to ethnic Russians in Estonia.[50] On 16 January 2007, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov

47 Maass, *EU-Russia Relations, 1999–2015*.

48 On the Russian minority in Estonia, see Yves B. Partschefeld, "A Complicated Three-Cornered Relationship: The Russophone Minority Between Estonian Home Country and Russian Mother Country," *Russian Analytical Digest* 176, no. 4 (2015): 13.

49 Partschefeld, "A Complicated Three-Cornered Relationship."

50 Brandon Valeriano and Ryan C. Maness, *Russia's Coercive Diplomacy: Energy, Cyber, and Maritime Policy as New Sources of Power* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 85; Partschefeld, 14. On compatriots in Russian foreign policy, see Marlene Laruelle, "Russia as a 'Divided Nation,' from Compatriots to Crimea: A Contribution to the Discussion on Nationalism and Foreign Policy," *Problems of Post-Communism* 62, no. 2 (2015): 88–97.

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condemned the new Estonian legislation. On the following day, the Chairman of the Russian State Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee characterized the Estonian law as "another chapter of 'heroization' of Nazism," calling for economic sanctions on Estonia.[51]

Most ethnic Estonians perceive the past differently, interpreting the Soviet Union engulfing their state and replacing Hitler's tyrannical rule with an equally violent Soviet occupation.[52] For them, the statue of a Soviet soldier embodied a remnant and symbol of heteronomy and occupation.

In reaction to plans to remove the monument, a Russian-speaking minority group known as the "Night Watch" (*Nochnoi dozor*) began to guard it, organizing nightly watches to defend the Soviet memorial site. On 26 April, approximately 1,000 people protested in Tallinn against the authorities' preparation for the removal of the monument, and the police used tear gas to disperse the crowd. Clashes between the Estonian Russophones and the Estonian authorities continued on 27 April, after the monument was removed and relocated to the Tallinn military cemetery: "One person was killed in the riots, 40 injured, and 300 people were temporarily arrested."[53] In support of the members of the "Night Watch," anti-Estonian protests took place in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

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51 "Estonia: Russia Opposes Law on Soviet War Memorials," *Radio Free Europe*, 17 January 2007, https://www.rferl.org/a/1074094.html (accessed 10 May 2020); Katja Wezel, "Russia—Estonia," in *Conflict Barometer 2007*, ed. HIIK—Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (Heidelberg, Germany: Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2007), 17.

51 Valeriano and Maness, *Russia's Coercive Diplomacy*, 97. For the Russian Duma's stenograms, see Federalnoie Sobraniie Rosiiskoi Federatsii, *Gosudarstvennaia Duma: Stenogramma zasedanii* (tom 33/160; Vesenniaia sessiia, 10–24 January 2007) (Moskva: Izdaniie Gosudarstvennoi Dumy, 2008), 330–31; also available at http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/KKm0bmNBJBUUQKwqI0zGYr0iZeel3VAu.pdf; see also "Moskva vozmushchena namereniiem vlastei Estonii demontirovat pamiatnik sovetskomu voinu," *Pervyi Kanal*, 16 January 2007, https://www.1tv.ru/news/2007-01-16/212416-moskva_vozmuschena_namereniem_vlastey_estonii_demontirovat_pamyatnik_sovetskomu_voinu (accessed 10 June 2020).

52 Valeriano and Maness, *Russia's Coercive Diplomacy*, 97; Partschefeld, 14.

53 Katja Wezel, "Estonia (Russian-speaking minority)," in *Conflict Barometer 2007*, ed. HIIK—Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (Heidelberg, Germany: Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2007), 13–14.

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They were organized by the government funded pro-Kremlin Russian youth groups "Nashi" and "Mestnye," and a political party "Molodaia Rossiia"[54] that were reported as having close connections to Putin and the Russian political elite.

Methods

On 27 April 2007, Estonia was hit by a major cyberattack which originated on Russian territory and consisted of a concerted series of online vandalism, botnet attacks, and denial-of-service attacks (DDoS). The estimated loss resulting from these operations was put at approximately 750 million dollars.[55] In a study about Russian coercive statecraft, Brandon Valeriano and Ryan C. Maness described these events as follows:

> The Russian response to the memorial's removal was swift; a flurry of complex, organized, and widespread malicious cyber operations flooded both private and public Estonian networks. From April 27 to around May 10, Estonian commerce suffered setbacks, as banks and businesses were temporarily offline. ATMs could not be accessed, and retail outlets were forced into cash-only polices for a number of days. The Estonian government was mostly incapable of operating, as many government services, ranging from vote registering to licensing renewals, are exclusively conducted online in the Baltic state. Furthermore, Estonian citizens could not conduct their daily activities, such as e-mail exchanges or social networking, on the Internet.[56]

Among the agencies and institutions that were seriously affected by Russian cyberattacks were the Estonian parliament as well as the websites of Prime Minister Ansip's political party and the national defense minister. Estonian universities, national newspapers, and Estonia's largest bank, Hansabank, had to temporarily cease their online services. Beyond DDoS and botnet attacks, cyber criminals also employed "mailbombing" that overloaded servers and blocked users' access to the Internet, and "war dialing," automated phone calls that were able to block all government and parliament offices.[57]

54 Wezel, "Russia—Estonia," 17.
55 Valeriano and Maness, *Russia's Coercive Diplomacy*, 97.
56 Ibid., 85.
57 Madelena Anna Miniats, "War of Nerves: Russia's Use of Cyber Warfare in Estonia, Georgia and Ukraine," *Bard Digital Commons*, 2019, https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2019/116/ (accessed 10 June 2020), 37.

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Consequences

The cyberattacks augmented Estonia's distrust toward Russia and produced a situation in which the majority of Estonian citizens, including the political and financial elites, felt threatened and disenchanted.[58] Before the cyberattacks, the 2004 Estonian National Security Concept expressed some tacit optimism about Russian-Estonian relations, but also explicitly stated that "owing to the contrary democratization processes and foreign policies of certain neighbours … it is still not possible to rule out threats to Estonia's security."[59] Despite some tacit optimism, Estonia explicitly stated in its 2004 National Security Concept document that, "owing to the contrary democratization processes and foreign policies of certain neighbours … it is still not possible to rule out threats to Estonia's security."[60]

These pre-existing concerns in Estonia were significantly exacerbated after the 2007 cyberattacks. Estonian popular support for EU integration shot up in 2007 and was the highest in the EU that year, largely due to the experience of EU solidarity with Estonia over the Bronze Night and the cyberattacks.[61]

Russian active measures also strained inter-Estonian societal relations. After the Bronze Night, the Russian minority was increasingly viewed by ethnic Estonians as a fifth column and Russia's agent, even though the majority of Estonia's Russians did not partake in or endorse the riots.[62] However, while there was (and is) a distinct difference between Russophones and speakers of Estonian in Estonia regarding the perception of a Russian threat and the implications of NATO membership, a consensus and a shared will

58 Valeriano and Maness, *Russia's Coercive Diplomacy*, 85.

59 Masha Hedberg and Andres Kasekamp, "Baltic States," in *The Handbook of European Defence Policies and Armed Forces*, eds. Hugo Meijer and Marco Wyss (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2018), https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780198790501.001.0001/oso-9780198790501-chapter-12.

60 "National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia," *Estonia,* 2004, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/156841/Estonia-2004.pdf (accessed 10 May 2020).

61 Andres Kasekamp, "Estonia: Eager to Set an Example in Europe," in *The New Member States and the European Union: Foreign Policy and Europeanization*, eds. Michael J. Baun and Dan Marek (New York: Routledge, 2013), 103.

62 Partschefeld, 15.

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emerged to defend the country from foreign aggression and interference.[63]

After the cyberattacks, Estonia's foreign and security elite, arguably even more so than the general population, began to view Russia as a more threatening and less trustworthy neighbor than prior to the attacks. Estonian officials stated that the attacks were traced to Russian government servers, ultimately accusing Russia of standing behind the perpetrators.[64] They argued that the cyberattacks should not be viewed as the work of a single mischievous hacker but rather as the result of a highly coordinated campaign.[65] The concerns of the Estonian political elite found their reflection in foundational policy documents following the cyberattacks. In its 2010 National Security Concept, Estonia emphasized its support for a strong and unified EU "to provide better protection against security threats" and to be "more capable and influential in foreign relations."[66] In contrast to Estonia's 2005 National Defense Strategy, its 2011 revised version explicitly stated that the "Russian Federation [had] demonstrated an increased interest in re-establishing its sphere of influence and strengthening its influence over Europe's security environment."[67] Further evincing a perception of Russia as threatening, Estonia implicitly expressed concerns about abandonment by its EU and NATO allies, stating that "small countries must account for the possibility that an unfavorable concurrence of events may result in the international community failing to pay attention to their security issues."[68]

63 Andres Kasekamp, "Why Narva Is Not Next," in *Baltic Sea Security: How Can Allies and Partners Meet the New Challenges in the Region?*, eds. Ann-Sofie Dahl and Københavns Universitet (Kbh.: Centre for Military Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2015), 31.

64 Wezel, "Russia—Estonia."

65 Robert Coalson, "Behind The Estonia Cyberattacks," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 6 March 2009, https://www.rferl.org/a/Behind_The_Estonia_Cyberattacks/1505613.html (accessed 20 May 2020).

66 See section 3.1 in "National Security Concept of Estonia," *Republic of Estonia/Ministry of Defense*, 12 May 2010, https://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/national_security_concept_of_estonia.pdf (accessed 14 June 2020).

67 Hedberg and Kasekamp, "Baltic States," 226.

68 Hedberg and Kasekamp, 227.

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In addition, the cyberattacks prompted Estonia to employ a multi-pronged strategy against future Russian subversion and aggression. This included measures aimed at increasing the resilience of Estonia's society, deepening existing alliance ties and strengthening the country's military forces. Estonia modernized its army and reconceptualized its security doctrine. This is evident both as a trend across time as well as in comparison with Latvia and Lithuania. Contrary to Latvia and Lithuania, Estonia had never abandoned conscription, and it was one among five other NATO members whose military expenditure exceeded 2 percent of GDP.[69] Between 2005 and 2015, Estonia increased its land forces from 3,429 to 5,300 (+55 percent), while Latvia and Lithuania reduced their land forces from 1,817 to 1,250 and 11,600 to 7,500 respectively (−31 and −35 percent).[70] From 2001 to 2009, Estonia also increased its share of military spending in its overall GDP from 1.5 percent to 2.3, while Latvia and Lithuania decreased theirs from 1.6 to .9 and 1.2 to 1.1 respectively.[71] Furthermore, Estonia maintained high mobilization capacity, even as it sought to expand out-of-area capabilities.[72]

Alongside Latvia and Lithuania, Estonia lobbied its allies to adopt a more assertive, robust, and effective policy vis-à-vis Russia. After the cyberattacks, Estonia pushed for help from NATO, making a reference to the alliance's Article 5 defense clause. However, it stopped short of formally invoking it, because other NATO member states had already signaled their opposition to this step.[73] Like other Baltic states, Estonia had long pressed for a viable NATO defense plan for the Baltics, and had also long been a strong supporter for a U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense initiative, especially regarding defense against strikes from an "unforeseen direction." Estonia,

69 Gediminas Vitkus, "Baltic States' Foreign Policies Vis-à-Vis Russia, in Light of the Ukraine Crisis," *Russian Analytical Digest: Russia and the Baltics/Poland* 176, no. 4 (December 2015): 5, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/195276/RussianAnalyticalDigest_176.pdf (accessed 10 May 2020).

70 Hedberg and Kasekamp, 217.

71 Ibid., 220.

72 Ibid., 224.

73 Ainius Lašas and David J. Galbreath, "Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania," in *National Perspectives on Russia: European Foreign Policy in the Making?*, eds. Maxine David, Jackie Gower, and Hiski Haukkala (London, U.K.: Routledge, 2013), 153.

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Latvia, and Lithuania protested vehemently, when the Obama-Medvedev reset with Russia seemed to jeopardize the implementation of this initiative.[74]

To deter Russian aggression, Estonia also reached out to the EU. Because the Estonian political leadership was eager to demonstrate its commitment to European integration, Estonian ratification of the EU Lisbon Treaty in 2008 went quickly and without complications. The main selling point in the Estonian public discourse was that the Treaty permitted Europe "to speak with one voice" in its external relations, which for Estonians meant mostly with Russia.[75] Estonia was also among those states that pushed for EU countermeasures against Russian information warfare and media falsifications.[76]

Unsurprisingly, Estonia was one of the most assertive voices in Europe when it came to interpreting and formulating policy responses, when after 2007 Russia used or threatened to use military force against its smaller neighbors. In 2008, when during the Russo-Georgian war Russian tanks rolled into Tbilisi, Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, together with Baltic and Polish colleagues, visited the Georgian capital Tbilisi to encourage a strong EU response to Russian aggression against Georgia, albeit unsuccessfully.[77] Ilves stated that the Russo-Georgian war represented a "paradigm shift" as the first invasion of one European state by another since the Cold War.[78] Ilves was one of the first EU political leaders who drew parallels between Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Nazi Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938.[79] Alongside Poland and its Baltic neighbors, Estonia chastised fellow EU member states for being passive and neutral in the face of Russian aggression at the 2 September 2008 emergency EU Summit.[80]

74 Lašas and Galbreath, "Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania," 154.
75 Kasekamp, "Estonia," 101.
76 Kasekamp, "Why Narva Is Not Next," 31.
77 Kasekamp, "Estonia," 108.
78 Ibid.
79 Vitkus, "Baltic States' Foreign Policies Vis-à-Vis Russia, in Light of the Ukraine Crisis," 4.
80 Lašas and Galbreath, "Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania," 162–63.

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Furthermore, Estonia was a continuous and adamant proponent of NATO and EU enlargement into eastern Europe, which Russia fiercely opposed. In its 2010 National Security Concept, Estonia further advocated the EU's enlargement through the inclusion of states partaking in the EU's Eastern Partnership.[81] In tune with these announcements and Latvia's and Lithuania's positions, Estonia continuously supported policies of NATO robustness vis-à-vis Russia.[82]

Estonian reforms to build resilience against Russia extended beyond the military sphere. In its 2011 National Defense Strategy, Estonia introduced the concept of "psychological defense," designed to "prevent panic, the spread of hostile influences and misinformation, thereby ensuring continued popular support to the state and its national defense efforts."[83] Estonia reduced energy dependence on Russia, more effectively than Latvia and Lithuania.[84] Also, to reduce the threat of future cyberattacks, Estonia adopted the Cyber Security Strategy in 2008 and established the Cyber Security Council for strategic inter-agency cooperation in 2009.[85] As a result of these countermeasures, Estonia has become an effective player in the area of global cyber security and cyber governance, repeatedly hosting the International Conference on Cyber Conflict, in which all major Western powers participate.[86]

Most Western states identified Russia as the orchestrator of the 2007 cyberattacks on Estonia.[87] After the attacks, the United States, the EU, and other Western states condemned Russia for abusing cyberspace.[88] The U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution reproaching the violent protests by ethnic Russians in Estonia and Russia's use of its cyber power against an otherwise peaceful country that respected the rule of law.[89]

81 Kasekamp, "Estonia," 105–6.
82 Lašas and Galbreath, 162–63.
83 Hedberg and Kasekamp, 229.
84 Lašas and Galbreath, 157–61.
85 Hedberg and Kasekamp, 228.
86 Valeriano and Maness, *Russia's Coercive Diplomacy*, 98.
87 Ibid., 85.
88 Ibid., 97–98.
89 Ibid.

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Estonia's allies undertook several steps to curb Russia's ability and willingness for future aggression. When the Kremlin-supported youth group "Nashi" blockaded the Estonian embassy and attacked the Estonian ambassador in Moscow, the EU issued a critical statement reminding Russia of obligations under the Vienna Convention.[90] In May 2007, at the EU-Russia summit, the EU publicly supported Estonia despite Russia's consistent political pressure on Estonia. EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso stated that "a difficulty for a Member-State is a difficulty for all of us at the European Union. […] an Estonian problem is a European problem as well."[91] To help Estonia and other allies increase their cyber resilience, NATO and the EU approved Estonian proposals and agreed that the respective centers for cyber security would be placed in Tallinn.[92]

Estonia's enduring activism and campaign for a more robust Western approach to Russia bore fruit, gaining credibility and momentum after the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, and even more so after the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014.[93] Observing the Crimean crisis in 2014, U.S. President Obama stated in Tallinn that the defense of Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius was just as important as the defense of Berlin, Paris, and London.[94]

90 Kasekamp, "Estonia," 105.
91 Ibid.
92 "The NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (NATO CCDCOE), 'About Us,'" *CCDCOE*, 2020, https://www.ccdcoe.org/about-us/ (accessed 12 May 2020).
93 Lašas and Galbreath, "Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania," 154; Jonas J. Driedger, "Alliance Persistence, Military Security and the 2016 Brexit Referendum: The Case of Estonia and the United Kingdom," in *Peace, Security and Defence Cooperation in Post-Brexit Europe*, eds. Cornelia-Adriana Baciu and John Doyle (Berlin, Germany: Springer, 2019), 97–116.
94 Kasekamp, "Why Narva Is Not Next," 32.

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Analysis and Results

Sources

Evidently, military-strategic motivations were at play when Russia initiated a series of active measures in Ukraine. The Russian political leadership had publicly communicated its preference for Yanukovych over Yushchenko as well as its desire for a close economic and strategic alignment with Ukraine. For Russia, Ukrainian compliance was strategically crucial, considering Ukraine's long land-border with Russia, Ukraine's tacit gravitation toward NATO, and shared naval bases in Crimea. The proposition that Russian active measures were primarily guided by military-strategic consideration in Ukraine is also supported by the higher severity and intrusiveness of Russian active measures in Ukraine as opposed to Estonia. As an EU and NATO member, Estonia had more reliable and powerful allies than Ukraine, a geopolitically important state with little external protection.

It is less clear, however, to what degree military-strategic motivations underpinned Russian active measures against Estonia. Unlike in the Ukrainian case, preventing EU or NATO accession could not have been the motive, as Estonia was already a member of both. A possible motivation could have been to use a show of digital force to intimidate Estonia and cause it to take a more conciliatory approach towards Russia. While this rationale cannot directly be confirmed, it is in line with Russia's continuous opposition to eastward enlargement of NATO. In this interpretation, Russia sought to put an end to Estonia's long-standing activism for NATO enlargement.[95]

There is little support for the proposition that Russian elites enacted active measures due to genuine ideological convictions. Some evidence exists that nationalists in Russia might have pressured their government towards action, and that Russian elites thought they needed to signal patriotic solidarity with Russians in Estonia. For example, after the Bronze Night, anti-Estonian demonstrations took place in Moscow and St Petersburg, organized by the

95 Lašas and Galbreath, "Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania," 163.

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Russian youth groups "Nashi," "Mestnyie," and "Molodaia Rossiya." On May 2, the Estonian embassy in Moscow had to temporarily suspend its consular service due to ongoing demonstrations.[96] However, it is unclear whether these groups acted against the wishes of the Kremlin and no significant evidence could be found that domestic nationalist pressure caused the Russian elite to use active measures against Ukraine. Furthermore, Russia's aggressive rhetoric and actions over Russian "compatriots" abroad arguably contributed to heightened tensions between them and other ethnic groups, counteracting the purported goal of Russia's compatriot policy.

There is, however, a clear indication of the Russian political elite attempting to manipulate public opinion in Russia and beyond, and to shape it to its advantage. An instrumental view of ideology evidently played a part in Russian active measures. In 2003, only four percent of Russian poll respondents stated they viewed *any* former Soviet Republic or their respective leaders as enemies of Russia.[97] Similarly, in mid-2004, 80 percent of Russian respondents reported a "good" general attitude towards Ukraine. "Good" evaluations continued to exceed "bad" ones by a wide margin throughout the Orange Revolution. However, the gap narrowed, coming closest to about 50 percent "good" and 40 percent "bad" when Ukraine and Russia underwent a gas conflict in January 2006.[98] It is safe to assume that, if anything, the Russian elite influenced Russian public opinion, rather than the other way around.

Russian officials, including Lavrov, accused the political elites of neighboring states of Russophobia, blaming them for violating bilateral agreements with Russia.[99] Moscow used similar rhetoric in the Ukrainian case, when it unambiguously sided with a pro-Russian candidate against a pro-Western candidate, antagonizing large

96 Wezel, "Russia – Estonia."

97 "Enemies," *Levada-Center: Yuri Levada Analytical Center*, 2 February 2018, https://www.levada.ru/en/2018/02/02/enemies/ (accessed 12 May 2020).

98 "Attitudes toward Other Countries," *Levada Center: Yuri Levada Analytical Center*, 13 April 2018, https://www.levada.ru/en/2018/04/13/attitudes-toward-other-countries/ (accessed 12 May 2020).

99 "Lavrov Urges Estonia to Stop Promoting Anti-Russian Hatred," *TASS: Russian News Agency*, 15 January 2018, https://tass.com/politics/985145 (accessed 12 May 2020).

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parts of Ukrainian society and ultimately dividing it into two camps. These strategies do not comport with the claims about Russian political elites' genuine beliefs in close cultural ties between Ukraine and Russia, claims that underpinned and justified systematic interventions in Ukraine's internal affairs. The accusations of Russophobia seem to be a versatile rhetorical tool but, as one scholar has argued,

> [t]his strategy may be a risky one. The distinctions that it rests on are subtle. They may not be appreciated either by domestic constituencies who are persuaded of Western hostility to Russia, or by Western audiences, elite or otherwise, who get messages about Russophobia from the Russian media as well as from Putin, Lavrov et al. In the first case, it may prove difficult to put the Russophobia weapon back in its case when it is no longer needed, or persuade Russians that the Russophobe threat is over if at some point Putin wants to compromise over Ukraine or some other foreign policy issue. In the second case, the broader message of Russophobia that is received in the West helps develop the idea that foreign policy differences with Russia are existential. This feeds the idea of a "new Cold War" as more than a cooling of relations but as an ideational divide that cannot be bridged. Ironically, accusations of Russophobia as they are made beyond the subtle discourse of Putin and Lavrov might in the end be the Russophobes' best weapon by becoming a self-fulling prophecy that drowns out the subtleties of official discourse.[100]

Methods

The evidence suggests that active measures were not the outcome of long-term premeditation, but rather a reaction to the changing political climate in these two post-Soviet states that gravitated toward European integration and cooperation. In the Ukrainian presidential election, Putin seems to have reached a firm decision to back Yanukovych only in September 2004 (the first round of elections were to be held on 31 October).[101] Reportedly, on the Ukrainian side this was prompted by Kuchma and Viktor Medvedchuk, Kuchma's chief of staff and Putin's close confidante. On the Russian side, Putin's decision was probably inspired by the aforementioned Gleb Pavlovskii, a prominent and well-connected political "fixer," and Vladislav

100 Neil Robinson, "'Russophobia' in Official Russian Political Discourse," *De Europa* 2, no. 2 (2019): 61–77, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338834066_Russophobia_in_Official_Russian_Political_Discourse (accessed 12 May 2020).

101 Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, 94.

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Surkov, First Deputy Chief of the Russian Presidential Administration and Putin's close advisor.[102] Similarly, the timing of the cyberattacks against Estonia also suggests that Russia acted retroactively and without long premeditation. The attacks occurred immediately after the Bronze Night and less than three weeks after the initial Estonian law was issued allowing the removal of the Soviet monument from Tallinn's downtown. None of these datapoints can conclusively rule out that the attacks against Estonia were premeditated and conceived long before the 2007 events, but the weight of the evidence points toward short-term decision-making.

When compared to Russian interference in the 2004 Ukrainian elections, the Russian cyberattacks were much more limited in the degree to which they endangered Estonian national security. In Ukraine, Russia invested massive financial and human resources, and might have even used violence to sway the election. As Brandon Valeriano and Ryan C. Maness have shown, despite the serious fallout that the cyberattacks caused in Estonia, Russia demonstrated some restraint in how the actual operation was conducted, which could have potentially threatened Estonian security in much more serious ways but it did not.[103] They argued that

> [a]lthough the incidents were widespread, they did not target a specific state strategy of Estonia; they only caused widespread yet relatively undamaging confusion and difficulty. The cyber operations were upsetting to Estonia and unsettling to the West. Many sites were flooded with Russian propaganda and false apologies. Others were DDoS methods that flooded websites and effectively shut them down. Estonia is known as the most 'plugged in' European country, as the most businesses, government entities, and citizens per capita are dependent upon the Internet. These cyber operations, therefore, affected most of the population, yet citizens could also combat most of the problems by operating as many did a few short years ago (based on cash and barter systems). Although these tactics were widespread, the long-term damage from these operations is, for the most part, nonexistent.[104]

102 Ibid., 93–94.

103 Valeriano and Maness, *Russia's Coercive Diplomacy*, 98–99. See also Brandon Valeriano and Ryan C. Maness, *Cyber War versus Cyber Realities: Cyber Conflict in the International System* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2015).

104 Valeriano and Maness, *Russia's Coercive Diplomacy*, 97.

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In both cases, active measures seemed to be chosen cautiously to avoid the fallout of more overt, direct, and coercive tactics. However, this rationale largely failed when the measures were squarely attributed to Russia.

Consequences

If Russia's goal was to render the target countries strategically compliant, be it through subversion as in Ukraine or by intimidation and punishment as in Estonia, it failed. In the aftermath of Russian active measures, both target countries adopted much more assertive and militarized policies toward Russia. This backlash was more pronounced in the case of Ukraine than in Estonia. Ukraine pushed strongly for EU and NATO accession, enacted military reforms, raised military expenditures, undertook steps to minimize the effect of future subversion, and confronted Russia through diplomatic means.

In the Estonian case, the political leadership also undertook domestic and diplomatic steps to guard against future Russian aggression. However, Estonia simultaneously reached out to Russia to improve relations and pursue common interests. Moreover, although Estonia considered the option of invoking its NATO membership status over the cyber operations, it ultimately did not follow this course, and instead shamed Russia publicly and globally for its behavior. Estonia neither retaliated against Russia in cyberspace, nor did it ask NATO or EU partners to impose economic sanctions on Russia or conduct joint military exercises in response to the cyberattacks.[105]

In the realm of EU policymaking, Estonia did not veto the negotiating mandate for a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Russia, as Poland had done in 2007 and Lithuania in 2008.[106] Moreover, Estonia tried to avoid criticizing Russia openly. On 9 May 2010, together with the Latvian President, Estonian President Ilves even participated in the Moscow celebration of the 65th anniversary of Russia's victory in the Second World

105 Valeriano and Maness, *Russia's Coercive Diplomacy*, 98, 100.
106 Kasekamp, "Estonia," 105.

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War. This was a significant symbolic gesture and a sign of reconciliation in the context of ambiguous and divergent interpretations of the Soviets' role in Estonia's history.[107] In 2012, Estonia and Russia resumed border demarcation negotiations, signing an agreement on the eve of Russia's annexation of Crimea on 16 January 2014.[108]

If Russian actions had been motivated by a genuine sense of ethnic and cultural solidarity with Russia's compatriots in Ukraine and Estonia, they must also be seen as a failure. Today's Russian speakers in Estonia do not wish to be part of Russia, and their loyalty to the Estonian state is not doubted by regional experts.[109] Ukraine also moved away, rather than toward, a sense of collective identity shared with Russia. Before Russia's use of active measures became common knowledge, in a September 2004 poll, almost half of all Ukrainian respondents stated that they would be better off in a union with Russia rather than in a union with the EU; 67.8 percent believed that Ukraine and Russia should be friendly states with open borders.[110] This stands in stark contrast with Ukraine's subsequent policy of aligning with the West and guarding against Russian interference.

Furthermore, in the aftermath of Russian active measures, Russian popular views toward the target countries also deteriorated. For instance, independent Levada polls demonstrated that the number of Russian respondents stating that former Soviet Republics (or their leaders) were enemies of Russia went up from four percent in August 2003 to 27 in August 2008. Notably, for the United States, the percentages went up from 31 in 2003 to 51 in 2008.[111] From mid-2004 to early 2006, when the Russo-Ukrainian gas conflict was in full swing, the general attitude of Russians toward Ukraine saw a slump from nearly 80 percent "good" to nearly

107 Vitkus, "Baltic States' Foreign Policies," 3.
108 Ibid., 3–4.
109 Kasekamp, "Why Narva Is Not Next."
110 Jakob Tolstrup, *Russia vs. the EU: The Competition for Influence in Post-Soviet States* (Boulder: First Forum Press, 2014), 47.
111 "Enemies," *Levada Center*.

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50 percent, while negative attitudes rose from about 20 to 40 percent.[112]

Increased threat perceptions seem to have been instrumental in how the target countries reacted to Russian active measures. Russian active measures considerably undermined Ukraine's political autonomy and shook the foundations of its national security. This included massive illegal funding of one of Ukraine's presidential candidates, targeting the Ukrainian opposition, a slandering information campaign, and the likely involvement in an assassination attempt against the opposition's main candidate and later Ukrainian president. Consequently, threat perceptions rose more among Ukrainian elites than among Estonian policymakers, and Ukraine adopted more assertive strategies against Russia than Estonia did.

Estonian perceptions of Russia deteriorated less profoundly than in Ukraine. There seemed to be several reasons for that. First, the cyberattacks, while disruptive and costly, did not directly threaten Estonia's political autonomy, its territorial integrity, and people's lives. Second, in 2004, Estonia became a member of the EU and NATO and, as a result, popular fear of military threats was significantly abated.[113] When Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008, and its invasion and deep penetration into Georgia proper also revealed Russia's willingness to use military force to achieve its goals, Estonian concerns towards Russia increased significantly.[114]

In both cases, the allies of the respective target state doubled down on their support for them, perceiving Russia as a greater threat and adopting a more robust foreign policy vis-à-vis Russia in the process. Again, the results of this response are more perceptible with regards to Ukraine. NATO's security concerns were only revived in full when Russia used blunt military force against Georgia in 2008 and conducted large-scale exercises like "The West" (*Zapad*) near the Baltic borders in 2009 and 2014.[115]

112 "Attitudes toward Other Countries," *Levada Center*.
113 Hedberg and Kasekamp, 215, 222.
114 Lašas and Galbreath, "Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania," 153.
115 Hedberg and Kasekamp, 226.

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Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that military-strategic considerations contributed to Russia's decision to launch a series of active measures in Ukraine. Furthermore, some data suggest that this has been the case in Estonia as well. There is little evidence to support the view that Russian elites felt compelled to enact active measures for genuinely held ideological views. However, Russian elites did use ideological narratives to advance broader policy goals. In both Estonia and Ukraine, the themes of "Russophobia" and the "protection of compatriots abroad" were used alongside active measures to pressure the targets into compliance and gain domestic support. In fact, Russia's ideological rhetoric complicated the lives of Russophones in Ukraine and Estonia, as many turned against Russia and disapproved its military aggression in Ukraine and "soft" measures in Estonia.

In addition, the evidence collected for the Ukrainian and Estonian cases suggests that active measures were the result of opportunistic and ad hoc decisions, rather than a product of long-term premeditation and fine-tuned means-goals calculation. In both cases, the choice for active measures against non-action or more overt and hostile means was dictated by considerations to minimize the subsequent diplomatic fallout. Russia, however, largely failed to achieve this goal and inadvertently harmed the foreign policy interests it apparently pursued. Importantly, at the early stage of Putin's rule, Russia's tactics and strategies in its "near abroad" shaped the West's perception of Russia as a threat to democracy, and regional and global security. Russian active measures caused elites in both target states to perceive Russia as a greater threat and mobilized their societies to reformulate their military and national security doctrines to better guard against future interference. Russian active measures against Ukraine were more severe and intrusive. In parallel, threat perceptions also grew more significantly in Ukraine, and the counterstrategies were more encompassing.

The results suggest three avenues for future research. First, with simple strategic and ideological considerations found wanting, a deeper understanding of the Russian elite's priorities and the

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bureaucratic processes that translate them into policy should explain why the sources, methods, and consequences of Russian active measures have taken their apparent form. Second, future studies should explore the degree to which active measures constitute an instance of "targeted signaling."[116] The measures against Ukraine and Estonia were evidently designed to signal Russian intentions to some groups, increasing support of the regime by Russian patriotic groups and by certain groups within the target state. They also signaled to intransigent politicians within the target state that Russia was willing to put pressure on them. Simultaneously, however, the semi-covert nature of the active measures also muddled Russian responsibility. This allowed third states to plausibly state that assertive reactions to Russian conduct were unwarranted. Third, the evident link between Russian active measures and subsequent changes in perceptions and policies of the target states should be further explored. Ukraine experienced more intrusive measures, underwent a more pronounced shift in societal views of Russia, and adopted more belligerent policies in the aftermath. This suggests a causal connection between active measures, changing threat perceptions, and subsequent backlash.

This analysis of Russian active measures against Ukraine and Estonia in the 2000s also has several implications for our wider understanding of security in Eastern Europe. As this study has shown, Russia has demonstrated a long-standing willingness to use active measures to support adherents and punish detractors in neighboring countries. Active measures tend to follow policy developments in the target country that run counter to professed Russian preferences. In contrast to the events following Russia's actions against Ukraine since 2014, the study shows that the subtle and covert nature of Russian operations might prevent the West from a strong response and support for the states targeted by Russia. Furthermore, as one might observe studying the events in the 2000s, the pendulum of Russian symbolic violence might swing swiftly, from assertive and violent tactics to "soft" measures and back to violence

116 I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for a useful suggestion about this point.

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in the form of conventional warfare and invasion, challenging major regional and global powers. Lastly, the restraint of Russia towards Estonia in 2007 relative to active measures against Ukraine in 2004, and especially in 2014, suggests that Russian actions are highly sensitive to whether a target country is a member state of the EU and NATO, or whether it aspires to such membership. This should cause Western policymakers to avoid "one-size-fits-all" policies and rather adopt country-specific measures to prevent future active measures and aggression.

Acknowledgements

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Russian (Dis)Information Warfare vis-à-vis the Holodomor-Genocide

Victoria A. Malko

In February 2020, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a lengthy interview to the Russian state news agency TASS, in which he shared his views of Ukrainian history.[1] This interview revealed his interpretation of the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations based on the idea of Russians and Ukrainians being "one people" sharing a language and cultural traditions, but who had been artificially separated. The persistence of this understanding of history and the process by which Russian nationalists have subordinated and distorted Ukrainian history, emphasizing the narrative of "unification," have been examined in numerous studies.[2] More recently, scholars have observed a new cycle of militarization in Russia,[3] in the tradition of Peter the Great and Joseph Stalin, which might propel Vladimir the (not so) Great[4] to world leadership and regional

1 See Andrei Vandenko's video interview with President Vladimir Putin, "20 Questions with Vladimir Putin: Putin on Ukraine," *TASS*, 20 February 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NG6dxqwxGE4 (accessed 23 May 2020).

2 Among others, see Serguei Ekeltchik, *History, Culture, and Nationhood under High Stalinism: Soviet Ukraine, 1939–1954* (unpublished thesis) (Edmonton, Alberta: Department of History and Classics, University of Alberta, 2000), 30–31; Konstantin Sheiko and Stephen Brown, *History as Therapy: Alternative History and Nationalist Imaginings in Russia, 1991–2014* (Stuttgart, Germany: ibidem-Verlag, 2014). One of the first attempts to remedy Soviet and Russian nationalist historiographical deformations was undertaken in 1981 in the West: see Ivan L. Rudnytsky, ed. (with the assistance of John-Paul Himka), *Rethinking Ukrainian History* (Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1981).

3 See interview with Igor Kliamkin on cycles of militarization and demilitarization in Russian history in Irina Chechel and Aleksandr Markov, "Zatukhaiushchaia tsyklichnost," *Gefter*, 6 November 2012, http://gefter.ru/archive/6660 (accessed 23 May 2020).

4 Leon Aron, "Vladimir the (not so) Great," *Wall Street Journal*, 31 May–1 June 2014, p. C1.

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dominance that would sustain the Soviet historical narrative glorifying the greatness and the exclusivity of the Russians, their language, and culture under a new guise—the "Russian World."[5]

Putin's history war has become part of his hybrid war against Ukraine. Although definitions can be imprecise and far from universal, Hans Petter Midttun, the Norwegian Defense Attaché in Ukraine from 2014 to 2018, offers his conceptualization of the Russian hybrid war as the parallel and synchronized use of both military and non-military means in an attempt to weaken and subdue Ukraine from within.[6] The war in the information space is part of a concerted strategy of total war that encompasses the use of economic, political, diplomatic, religious, legal, security, cyber, and military instruments.[7]

In Ukraine, a "post-genocidal society,"[8] Putin's interpretation of history ignites traumatic memories of Stalin's extermination by hunger in 1932–1933, when a theory of a "unified proto-Russian people" was reestablished, jeopardizing the survival of Ukraine's national historical narrative. For fifteen years, until the early 1930s, Mykhailo Hrushevskyi's paradigm of Ukrainian national history and other historical accounts of Russia and Kyivan Rus, including

5 Taras Kuzio, "Putin Forever: Ukraine Faces the Prospect of Endless Imperial Aggression," *Atlantic Council*, 13 February 2020, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putin-forever-ukraine-faces-the-prospect-of-endless-imperial-aggression/ (accessed 25 May 2020). Kuzio argues that Putin's mix of Tsarist and Soviet Russian nationalism gave rise to a "Russian World" doctrine. The visible sign of it is the Russian World Foundation established in 2007.

6 Hans Petter Midttun, "Hybrid War in Ukraine—Predictions for 2019 and Beyond," *Euromaidan Press*, 18 April 2019, http://euromaidanpress.com/2019/04/18/hybrid-war-in-ukraine-predictions-for-2019-and-beyond/ (accessed 25 May 2020).

7 Janis Berzins, "Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy" (report from the National Defence Academy of Latvia and the Center for Security and Strategic Research), *Informal Institute for National Security Thinkers and Practitioners Blog*, 30 April 2014, http://maxoki161.blogspot.com/2014/04/russias-new-generation-warfare-in.html (accessed 28 May 2020).

8 James E. Mace, "Is the Ukrainian Genocide a Myth?" in *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932–1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, eds. Lubomyr Y. Luciuk and Lisa Grekul (Kingston, Ontario: Kashtan Press, 2008), 57.

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Marxist historical narratives, "existed side by side."[9] Although historians like Matvei Liubavskii embraced the statist approach to all-Russian history, "giving greater prominence to the history of Southwestern Rus," they had not gone as far as Hrushevskyi who completely separated Ukrainian history from that of Russia.[10] Hrushevskyi believed that Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians each "deserved a history of their own."[11] Yet, after Stalin consolidated his power and subdued Ukraine, Hrushevskyi's interpretation was marginalized and replaced by the canon imposed by Moscow. Soviet disinformation succeeded in hiding the truth about the 1932–1933 famine from the West[12] and in rewriting Hrushevskyi's history, emphasizing the friendship between the "brotherly nations," Ukrainians and Russians, who together had fought the "enemies" of the Soviet state. Ukrainian teachers who embraced Hrushevskyi's narrative and for whom their national bard Taras Shevchenko's verses exemplified the national liberation struggle were harassed and fired. One such teacher, among many, was Pastushko from Artemivsk, who was denounced and dismissed as a "follower of the 'Ukrainian fascists' (!?) Hrushevskyi, Yefremov, and Hermaize."[13]

Stalin's genocide in Ukraine went largely unacknowledged[14] for over half a century until a commission established by the U.S.

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9 For a discussion about pre- and post-revolutionary Russian historical writings, see Serhii Plokhy, *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2005), esp. 346; Panteleimon Kovaliv, *Vstup do istorii skhidnioslovianskykh mov* (New York: Shevchenko Scientific Society, 1970), 24–25; Jonathan Bromley, *Heinemann Advanced History: Russia 1848–1917*, 1st ed. (Oxford, U.K.: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 2002), 161–70.

10 Plokhy, *Unmaking Imperial Russia*, 106.

11 Ibid.

12 Taras Kuzio and Paul D'Anieri, "The Soviet Origins of Russian Hybrid Warfare," *E-International Relations*, 17 June 2018, https://www.e-ir.info/2018/06/17/the-soviet-origins-of-russian-hybrid-warfare/ (accessed 23 May 2020).

13 Yurii Mytsyk, "Chystky natsionalistiv u shkolakh 1934 r. (za materialamy kolyshnioho Dnipropetrovskoho oblasnoho partarkhivu)," in *Ukrainskyi holokost 1932–1933: Svidchennia tykh, khto vyzhyv*, vol. 3 (Kyiv: NaUKMA, 2003–2013), 260.

14 As early as September 1932 through March 1933, several brave reporters, among them Canadian free-lance journalist Rhea Clyman and Welsh journalist Gareth Jones, published accounts of the famine in Ukraine in major Western

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Congress published its report in April 1988, and in 1990, three volumes of oral history interviews with over two hundred witnesses.[15] The findings of the commission were unequivocal: "Joseph Stalin and those around him committed genocide against Ukrainians in 1932–1933."[16] In commemorating the 85th anniversary of the genocide in 2018 at the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide, on the last Saturday of November, then President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko put historical responsibility for the Holodomor on the Russian Federation as the successor to the former Soviet Union.[17] He announced that he had proposed to amend the constitution to make permanent a new direction in Ukraine's foreign policy, affirming that Ukraine would be fully integrated into NATO and the European Union: "there will be no future Holodomor, no Great Purge, [and] no Russification."[18] In response, on the following day, Sunday, 25 November 2018, President Putin ordered an attack on Ukrainian vessels in the Black Sea.[19] This action was not only an act of war, it also violated the Freedom of the Sea as enshrined in international law. Poroshenko appealed to Ukraine's partners, the signatories of the Budapest Memorandum, and EU member states to

dailies, but their voices were silenced by Soviet disinformation. See Jars Balan, "Rhea Clyman: A Forgotten Canadian Eyewitness to the Hunger of 1932," in *Women and the Holodomor-Genocide: Victims, Survivors, Perpetrators*, ed. Victoria A. Malko (Fresno, CA: The Press at California State University, 2019), 91–117; and Gareth Jones, *"Tell Them We Are Starving": The 1933 Soviet Diaries of Gareth Jones*, ed. Lubomyr Y. Luciuk (Kingston, Canada: Kashtan Press, 2015).

15 Commission on the Ukraine Famine, *Investigation of the Ukrainian Famine, 1932–1933: Report to Congress* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988; hereafter: *Report to Congress*); James E. Mace and Leonid Heretz, eds., *Investigation of the Ukrainian Famine, 1932–1933: Oral History Project of the Commission on the Ukraine Famine*, vols. 1–3 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990).

16 *Report to Congress*, vii.

17 "Poroshenko Blames Russia as USSR Successor for 1930s Famine," *Interfax-Ukraine*, 24 November 2018, https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/547761.html (accessed 23 May 2020).

18 "Poroshenko: Istorychna vidpovidalnist za Holodomor—na Rosiiskii Federatsii," *Ukrainska Pravda*, 24 November 2018, https://www.pravda.com.ua/ukr/news/2018/11/24/7199187/index.amp (accessed 23 May 2020).

19 Alex Johnson, "Russia Attacks, Seizes Ukrainian Vessels in Black Sea off Crimea," *NBC News*, 25 November 2018, https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/ukraine-crisis/russia-attacks-seizes-three-ukrainian-naval-vessels-coast-crimea-black-n939876 (accessed 23 May 2020).

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protect Ukraine.[20] At a press conference, when asked about Russia's commitment to protect Ukraine's sovereignty under the Budapest Memorandum, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov changed the subject and suggested that Ukraine's leaders were illegitimate. Lavrov went as far as to call Ukrainian people, who stood on the barricades of the Euromaidan in 2013–2014 to preserve their freedom and dignity in the face of the corrupt Yanukovych regime, "radical nationalists" and "neo-Nazis."[21]

As Russia has rediscovered a sense of geopolitical self-confidence, lost after the Soviet collapse, such conduct has become increasingly frequent. Putin, who was appointed in August 1999 by then ailing Russian President Boris Yeltsin as Prime Minister, rose to power with the orchestrated outbreak of the second war in Chechnya, a prelude to Russia's aggressive tactics in its "near abroad."[22] Russia attacked Georgia in August 2008 behind the smokescreen of the Beijing Olympics, and in March 2014 annexed Crimea in southern Ukraine behind the smokescreen of the Sochi Olympics. Russia's occupation of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine in April 2014 followed. Cease fire after cease fire has been violated, resulting in over 13,000 Ukrainian soldiers and volunteers being killed and over two million people internally displaced as airports, schools, hospitals, and roads were shelled to rubble.[23]

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20 The Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances was signed on 5 December 1994 by the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States, guaranteeing Ukraine's sovereignty in return for dismantling its nuclear arsenal. Neither the Russian Federation nor the United Kingdom have recognized the Holodomor as genocide.

21 "Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Remarks and Answers to Media Questions at a News Conference," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, 26 November 2018, https://www.mid.ru/en/press_service/minister_speeches/-/asset_publisher/7OvQR5KJWVmR/content/id/3420700 (accessed 23 May 2020).

22 Victoria A. Malko, *The Chechen Wars: Responses in Russia and the United States* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2015), v.

23 Catherine Wanner, "Commemoration and the New Frontiers of War in Ukraine," *Slavic Review* 78, no. 2 (2019): 329.

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Alongside the war for the territory, the war for history has emerged as an important feature of Putin's reign, becoming a symbol of the country's bid to reassert its regional as well as global influence. Russian and Ukrainian historiographies differ in their interpretation of six issues: (1) Ukrainian national identity; (2) the national liberation struggle of 1917–1921 and the establishment of the Ukrainian People's Republic as an independent state in 1918; (3) the genocidal famine perpetrated by Stalin and his accomplices to denationalize Ukraine; (4) the double colonization and exploitation of Ukraine's natural resources by Hitler's Third Reich and Stalin's Soviet Union; (5) the legitimacy of the transfer of the Crimean peninsula; and (6) the indigenous origins of the Ukrainian population in the Donbas. Rival historical interpretations are both possible and desirable. However, as Oleksiy Goncharenko has noted, "when history is weaponized by an aggressor as part of an attack on the country, there can be no room for ambiguity. The sooner we acknowledge the role of history within Russia's wider hybrid war against Ukraine, the more effectively we will be able to respond to the challenges this creates."[24]

The following sections examine Russian disinformation tactics as part of Putin's hybrid war against Ukraine, focusing on one of the most critical discursive formations for both Ukrainians and Russians, albeit for different reasons—the Holodomor. Ukraine's struggle for the affirmation of the Holodomor as genocide faces the challenge of Russia's denial which protects its self-image.[25] The denial comprises an array of tactics: challenging the legal definition of the Holodomor as genocide, reinterpreting the genocide against the Ukrainian people as an "all-Union" famine, covering up the true extent of population losses, and criminalizing Holodomor studies, all while activating pro-Russian forces in Ukraine to subvert the country from within.

24 Oleksiy Goncharenko, "Ukraine Cannot Stay Neutral in Putin's History War," *Atlantic Council*, 21 April 2020, https://atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraine-cannot-stay-neutral-in-putins-history-war/ (accessed 23 May 2020).

25 Jurij Dobczansky, "Affirmation and Denial: Holodomor-related Resources Recently Acquired by the Library of Congress," *Holodomor Studies* 1, no. 2 (2009): 153–62. On 1 July 2009, the Library of Congress introduced two new subject headings: *Holodomor denial literature* and *Holodomor denial*.

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The Meaning of Denial

"Denial is the final stage that lasts throughout and always follows genocide. It is among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres," Professor of Genocide Studies and Prevention Gregory H. Stanton warned his listeners at the U.S. Department of State in 1996.[26] In the wake of the Rwandan genocide, Stanton proposed measures aimed at preventing mass violence from occurring. He refined his model and expanded it to ten stages in 2013, the last being denial, which included a list of actions typically taken by perpetrators.[27] They "dig up the mass graves, […] try to cover up the evidence and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims. They block investigations of the crimes, and continue to govern until driven from power by force, when they flee into exile. There they remain with impunity … unless they are captured and a tribunal is established to try them."[28] Among the most effective response measures, Stanton suggested, is to hold the perpetrators accountable by putting them on trial, in international tribunals, or national courts. To prevent the genocide from occurring, in addition to justice, he argued for inoculation through education in schools and the media about the facts of a genocide, the suffering it caused its victims, the motivations of its perpetrators, and the need for restoration of the rights of its victims.

The position of Soviet authorities regarding the man-made nature of the Ukrainian famine and the Kazakh famine, as well as the ultimate destruction of "small" ethnic groups, such as the Crimean

26 Professor of Genocide Studies and Prevention at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University in Arlington, Virginia, Stanton also served as a legal advisor to Rukh, the Ukrainian Independence Movement, work for which he was named Man of the Year by the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America in 1992.

27 Gregory H. Stanton, "The Ten Stages of Genocide," *Genocide Watch*, 2020, https://www.genocidewatch.com/ten-stages-of-genocide (accessed 26 May 2020).

28 Ten stages of genocide include: (1) classification, (2) symbolization, (3) discrimination, (4) dehumanization, (5) organization, (6) polarization, (7) preparation, (8) persecution, (9) extermination, and (10) denial. See Stanton, "The Ten Stages of Genocide."

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Tatars in the Soviet Union, are examples of denial of genocides against national minorities. Like their Soviet predecessors, Russian officials deny that the Holodomor constitutes a genocide. In 2017, two days before the Holodomor Remembrance Day, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova informed the international community that the Ukrainian government's position that the 1932–1933 famine in Ukraine was a genocide "contradict[ed] historical facts," and that claims about the uniqueness of the famine in Ukraine had been "politically charged."[29] Moreover, Stalin, the key perpetrator of Soviet genocides including the Holodomor,[30] is enjoying renewed popularity in Russia, and the systematic denials of Stalin's genocides have become the norm in the Russian Federation. Paula Chertok, a linguist, lawyer, writer, and daughter of Holocaust survivors from Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland, believes that "these denials have taken on a distinctly nasty character" since Ukrainian-Russian relations rapidly deteriorated after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. She argues that Russian "state-run media have been attempting to use Holodomor denial to boost their campaign against Ukraine and the West," claiming that the calamity had been invented by Ukrainians and "perpetrated by neo-Nazis, who conveniently are also running the coup government in Kyiv."[31]

Denial Tactics

Challenging the Legal Definition

In its hybrid war against Ukraine, Russia has employed an arsenal of diplomatic and legal instruments. On 28 November 2006, Ukraine adopted the law "On the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine," which recognized the cataclysmic historical event that

29 Ben Johnson, "Russia Still Denies the Holodomor Was 'Genocide'," *Acton Institute*, 27 November 2017, https://www.acton.org/publications/transatlantic/2017/11/27/russia-still-denies-holodomor-was-genocide (accessed 29 May 2020).

30 See Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

31 Paula Chertok, "History, Identity and Holodomor Denial: Russia's Continued Assault on Ukraine," *Euromaidan Press*, 7 November 2015, http://euromaidanpress.com/2015/11/07/history-identity-and-holodomor-denial-russia-s-continued-assault-on-ukraine/ (accessed 29 May 2020).

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occurred between the two world wars in legal terms as genocide against the Ukrainian national group and criminalized Holodomor denial.[32] In 2007, Ukraine launched a campaign to achieve worldwide recognition of the Holodomor as genocide in the U.N. and other international organizations. In response, in April 2008, when the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania, was discussing Ukraine's membership, the Russian State Duma (the lower house of the Federal Assembly) adopted a resolution, stating that "there is no historic evidence that the famine was organized on ethnic grounds." Earlier in March 2008, Valerii Loshchinin, Russia's envoy to the U.N. office in Geneva, told the seventh session of the U.N. Human Rights Council: "We urge against political speculation on subjects related to the general, sometimes tragic, historical past, and against using this for a voluntary interpretation of the rules of international law."[33] The diplomat also argued that Ukraine's Holodomor should not be recognized as genocide under the 1948 Convention on Genocide.

Deniers argue that Cold War politics shaped the drafting of the U.N. Convention on Genocide, "gutting" many of Raphael Lemkin's original ideas and rendering it "stillborn."[34] They further argue that because the term was coined a decade after the famine, the U.N. Convention of 1948 should not be applied retroactively. This argument has been refuted by Ukrainian legal scholars. Prohibition of genocide is a *jus cogens* norm,[35] to which the general rule of non-retroactivity does not apply. Besides, under the 1968 U.N. Convention on the Non-applicability of Statutory Limitations on War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity, no statutory limitations

32 "Zakon Ukrainy 'Pro Holodomor 1932–1933 v Ukraini' No. 376-V (*Vidomosti Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy* 2006, No. 50, 504), 28 November 2006," in *The Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine as a Crime of Genocide under International Law,* eds. V. Vasylenko and M. Antonovych (Kyiv: Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, 2016), 226–28.

33 "Russian Lawmakers Reject Ukraine's View on Stalin-era Famine," *Sputnik News*, 2 April 2008, https://sputniknews.com/world/20080402102830217/ (accessed 23 May 2020).

34 Anton Weiss-Wendt, *The Soviet Union and the Gutting of the U.N. Genocide Convention* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017), 280.

35 Bohdan A. Futey, "International Legal Responsibility for Genocide: Justice in the Courts," paper presented at a Conference on Famine-Holodomor, Kyiv, Ukraine, 25–26 September 2008, *Holodomor Education*, 2009, http://www.holodomoreducation.org/index.php/id/178/lang/en (accessed 23 May 2020).

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shall apply to crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide as defined in the Genocide Convention, regardless of the dates of their commission, "even if such acts do not constitute a violation of the domestic law of the country in which they were committed."[36]

Significantly, the U.N. Genocide Convention reflects the *génocidaire*[37] Stalin's influence on the process. Both Stalin and his Foreign Minister Viacheslav Molotov read through and commented on a draft of the future Genocide Convention. In bold red pencil, Stalin crossed out the word "political" as a motivation for committing genocide, and Molotov crossed out the entire last paragraph on cultural genocide. They also eliminated the "shortcomings" in the draft theses that they found unacceptable from the Soviet standpoint, crossing out phrases like "forced labor" and "confiscation of property."[38] Clearly, Stalin could not incriminate himself.

Regrettably, Lemkin's conceptualization of Soviet genocide in Ukraine remained obscured until 2008, when the international community commemorated the 60th anniversary of the U.N. Genocide Convention and his typewritten notes were published.[39] Historian Roman Serbyn first encountered the source cited by French scholar Jean-Louis Panné.[40] Lemkin's interpretation went beyond the extermination of people by hunger to what he called the "classic example of Soviet genocide, its longest and broadest experiment in Russification." In his notes, Lemkin characterized Kremlin policy in

36 Kateryna Bondar, "Legal Definition of Genocide: Examining the 1932–1933 Holodomor in Ukraine under the Genocide Convention," in *The Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine as a Crime of Genocide under International Law*, eds. V. Vasylenko and M. Antonovych (Kyiv: Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, 2016), 99.

37 Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, 133.

38 Weiss-Wendt, *The Soviet Union and the Gutting of the U.N. Genocide Convention*, 64–66, 70.

39 Megan O'Shea located the document at the request of Roman Serbyn in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division of the New York Public Library. The text was published in *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932–1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, eds. Lubomyr Y. Luciuk and Lisa Grekul (Kingston, Ontario: Kashtan Press, 2008), 235–42. The text was translated into 28 languages and published in Ukraine under the title *Rafael Lemkin: Radianskyi henotsyd v Ukraini (stattia 28 movamy)*, eds. Roman Serbyn and Olesia Stasiuk (Kyiv: Maisternia knyhy, 2009).

40 Jean-Louis Panné, "Rafaël Lemkin ou le pouvoir d'un sans-pouvoir," introduction to Rafaël Lemkin, *Qu'est-ce qu'un génocide?* (Monaco: Édition du Rocher, 2008), 7–66.

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Ukraine in the first half of the twentieth century as "not simply a case of mass murder, [but as] a case of genocide, of destruction, not of individuals only, but of a culture and a nation."[41] In his eight pages of typewritten notes, drafted to address the Ukrainian community in New York on 20 September 1953[42] on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the 1933 famine, Lemkin defined Stalin's policy in "the Ukraine," as he referred to the Soviet republic at that time, as a four-pronged attack. The first blow was aimed against the Ukrainian intelligentsia (the "brain" of the nation), the second against the clergy (the "soul" of the nation), and the third at the farmers (the "repository of the tradition, folklore and music, the national language and literature," in short, the "national spirit"). The aim of the fourth prong of attack was to change the demographic composition of the population in Ukraine by resettling Russians into areas depopulated by the genocidal famine.

A proponent of Lemkin's conceptualization ever since its discovery, Serbyn concluded that the Ukrainian famine of 1932–1933 met the criteria set by Article II of the U.N. Convention on Genocide, arguing that the two categories, "national" and "ethnic(al)," do apply to the Ukrainian case.[43] The intent was "to destroy in part" the nationally conscious elites and a large portion of the most dynamic element of Ukrainian society, the farmers, so as to reduce

41 Raphael Lemkin, "Soviet Genocide in the Ukraine" (typewritten notes), folder 16, box 2, reel 3, ZL-273, "The Raphael Lemkin Papers, 1947–1959," Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library.

42 "Ukrainians March in Protest Parade. 10,000 Here Mark Anniversary of the 1933 Famine—Clergy Join in the Procession," *New York Times*, 21 September 1953; "Over 154,000 NY Ukrainian Americans March in Protest Parade Marking Anniversary of Soviet Fostered 1932–1933 Famine in Ukraine," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 26 September 1953. Both newspapers mentioned that Lemkin spoke about "the millions of Ukrainians who died victims to the Soviet Russian plan to exterminate as many of them as possible in order to break the heroic Ukrainian national resistance to Soviet Russian rule and occupation and to Communism." Per personal communication with Roman Serbyn on 20 September 2019, most probably Lemkin had little time to deliver the entire speech; thus, his concept of Soviet genocide in Ukraine as the four-pronged attack was not mentioned in the newspaper reports and remained obscured throughout the twentieth century.

43 Roman Serbyn, "The Ukrainian Famine of 1932–1933 as Genocide in the Light of the U.N. Convention of 1948," *The Ukrainian Quarterly* LXII, no. 2 (2006): 181–94.

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Ukrainians to obedient Russified "cogs of the great state mechanism," Stalin's favorite imagery for Soviet citizens. Serbyn has deepened the conceptualization by highlighting two parallel elements in Stalin's strategy to create a single state with a single Soviet people with a uniform consciousness: "In this way Ukrainians would be destroyed as a national and an ethnic group. To achieve this goal, Stalin used lethal means, starvation imposed on the Ukrainian farming population—the most costly in terms of human lives, but also executions and deportations to Siberia of any Ukrainians opposed or accused of opposition to the regime and its policies. The non-lethal method was 'reeducation' of the society into loyal citizens of the [G]reat Russian state that Stalin was building."[44] Putin's hybrid war resembles Stalin's strategy to subjugate Ukrainians using both lethal and non-lethal means.

Ukraine's response to the legal challenge was to investigate human rights violations by the Soviet government. On 22 May 2009, the Security Service of Ukraine brought a criminal case for the crime of genocide in Ukraine in 1932–1933 and initiated court proceedings on the basis of Article 442 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.[45] After examining the evidence, on 13 January 2010, the Kyiv Court of Appeals in Ukraine ruled that Joseph Stalin and his accomplices were guilty of perpetrating "the genocide of part of a Ukrainian national group by creating conditions of life calculated to bring about its destruction."[46] The legal experts found sufficient precedent to hold the perpetrators accountable, albeit posthumously.

44 See "Holodomor in the Context of Genocide: A Narrow vs Broad Definition of Genocide," 1–2; a summary of survey findings was distributed by Lana Babij via email to a group of the Holodomor scholars on 19 October 2019.

45 "SBU vozbudila ugolovnoe delo po faktu sovershenia Genotsida," *UNIAN*, 25 May 2009, https://www.unian.net/politics/225116-sbu-vozbudila-ugolovnoe-delo-po-faktu-sovershenia-genotsida-dopolnennaya.html (accessed 23 May 2020).

46 "Ruling of the Kyiv Court of Appeals Concerning the Commission of the Crime of Genocide Perpetrated by J. V. Stalin (Dzhugashvili), V. M. Molotov (Skriabin), L. N. Kaganovich, P. P. Postyshev, S. V. Kossior, V. Ia. Chubar, and M. M. Khataevich, 13 January 2010," in Vasylenko and Antonovych, 356.

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Advancing the "All-Union" Famine Argument

The Russian rhetoric behind the façade of the "all-Union" famine as a "tragedy of all the Soviet countryside"[47] points to its economic causes and deflects attention from the national (in Ukraine) and ethnic (Ukrainian minority in Russia) group that was targeted in the genocide. In an attempt to control the narrative, spurred by the recognition of the Holodomor as genocide in Ukraine, Russian historian Viktor Kondrashin of Penza State Pedagogical University, on behalf of the head of the Federal Archival Agency (*Rosarkhiv*) Vladimir Kozlov, issued instructions to Russian scholars and researchers regarding the proper presentation of the famine of 1929–1934 in the USSR. This conceptual framework for discussing the famine, as spelled out in Decree No. 47 of the Federal Archival Agency[48] issued on 17 October 2007, was conveniently cast in generic terms as "all-Union," a tragedy caused by enforced collectivization and industrialization. Academics were ordered to use a preapproved collection of documents to conform their writing about the famine to the conceptual framework, with the purpose of suppressing anything that would demonstrate the unique situation in Ukraine.[49]

This collection of archival materials became an instrument in information warfare designed to impose the Russian political interpretation of the famine on academia and export it to Ukraine. First, on 17 January 2007, the Rosarkhiv sent a letter to the then head of

47 Viktor Kondrashin, "Hunger in 1932–1933—A Tragedy of the Peoples of the USSR," *Holodomor Studies* 1, no. 2 (2009): 21.

48 A summary of the contents of Decree No. 47 of the Federal Archival Agency, issued on 17 October 2007, with specific instructions on how to use a collection of documents "Famine in the USSR, 1929–1934" is available at *Rosarkhiv* (the Federal Archival Agency), 2008, https://web-archiv.ru/archive/507 (accessed 23 May 2020).

49 In 2007, Viktor Kondrashin was appointed as the editor of a three-volume collection of documents from the Russian central and regional archives that presented the famine in the USSR as a common tragedy of all the people. In his presentation at the first seminar on 19 July 2010, "Russia-Ukraine: Problems of Interpretation and Assessment of the Holodomor of 1932–33," Kondrashin admitted that his Ukrainian colleagues refused to participate in the joint project. See the transcript of Kondrashin's presentation: Viktor Kondrashin, "Golod 1932–33 gg. v nauchnykh issledovaniiakh i istoricheskoi publitsistike," *Uroki istorii: XX vek*, 4 October 2010, https://urokiistorii.ru/article/1185 (accessed 23 May 2020).

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the State Committee on Archives in Ukraine Olga Ginzburg. The letter contained Kondrashin's instructions (the only difference being the date range of 1932–1933 in the title), deliberately singling out the "Ukrainian factor" to be eliminated from the historical narrative.[50] The following year, the Rosarkhiv together with the "Historical Memory" Foundation[51] organized an international conference in Kharkiv on the eve of the Holodomor Remembrance Day, 21 November 2008. Entitled "The Famine in the USSR in the 1930s: Historical and Political Interpretations," the conference was similar to the Moscow 17 November conference that included the same participants. The only difference was that it was initially planned for Kyiv.[52] The participants included Viktor Kondrashin and Nikolai Ivnitskii, the authorities on famine research in the USSR, as well as Stephen G. Wheatcroft, professor of Russian and Soviet History at the University of Melbourne, Australia, who used Russian archives to write his book, *The Years of Hunger*.[53] Experts from Belarus

50 For a complete text of the letter and Kondrashin's seven-page "prospectus" for the proposed three-volume collection of documents from the Russian archives with recommendations on how to discuss the famine of 1930–1934 in the USSR, see "Podobrat ikh [dokumenty] sleduiet takim obrazom, chtoby byla vidna tragediia vsego sovetskogo krestianstva, bez aktsenta na Ukrainu." [Kondrashin V. Plan-prospekt z rekomendatsiiamy shchodo vidboru dokumentiv dlia zbirnyka 'Golod v SSSR. 1932–1933.' Dodatok do lysta kerivnyka Federalnoho arkhivnoho ahenstva Rosiiskoi Federatsii V. Kozlova do Holovy Derzhkomarkhivu Ukrainy O. Ginzburg z propozytsiiamy pro spivpratsiu. 17 sichnia 2007]. From a personal archive of Hennadii Boriak, available at: *The Institute of History of Ukraine; the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine*, 5 December 2017, http://resource.history.org.ua/item/0013470 (accessed 25 June 2020). It was first published by Pavlo Solodko in *Istorychna Pravda* on 26 November 2012, http://www.istpravda.com.ua/artefacts/2012/11/26/101572/ (accessed 25 June 2020).

51 The "Historical Memory" Foundation (*Fond Istoricheskaiia Pamiat*) was established in the autumn of 2008. One of its main goals is to counteract "anti-Russian" interpretation of history in the neighboring states as stated on its website http://historyfoundation.ru (accessed 23 June 2020).

52 Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "'Capital of Despair': Holodomor Memory and Political Conflicts in Kharkiv after the Orange Revolution," *East European Politics and Societies* 25, no. 3 (2011): 631.

53 R.W. Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933*, vol. 5 Industrialization of Soviet Russia (London, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

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and Kazakhstan were also among the speakers. However, the political agenda of Ukrainian-Russian relations took precedence over historical research. Speakers at the plenary session included the Russian ambassador to Ukraine Viktor Chernomyrdin and the director of the "Historical Memory" Foundation Aleksandr Diukov among others. The conference hosts were the vice mayor of Kharkiv and the head of the Kharkiv branch of the Party of Regions. The conclusion on the causes, character, and number of victims of the 1929–1934 famine in the USSR had been prepared in advance and distributed on a CD with documents from Russian archives.[54] The Russian position on the famine was repeated in an open letter to the presidents of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. The letter accused then President Viktor Yushchenko of using the tragedy of the 1930s to legitimize his political course aimed at "excluding Ukraine from the common cultural, historical and economic space of the unique East-Slavic civilization."[55] The conference was seen as a provocation and insult to Ukrainian national feelings; the opponents could not participate and present their arguments because it was accessible by invitation only in a remote hotel far away from the city center. Thus, the conference had little resonance in the academic community in Ukraine, further intensifying the political polarization in society over the Holodomor.

When Lemkin's speech on Soviet genocide in Ukraine became public, and the National Museum "Memorial of the Holodomor Victims" opened its exhibitions in Kyiv in 2008, Russia's State Duma went on the offensive, promoting a counter-narrative. "There is no historical proof that the famine was organized along ethnic lines. Its victims were millions of citizens of the Soviet Union, representing different peoples and nationalities living largely in agricultural areas of the country," the Russian State Duma resolution

54 Zhurzhenko, "Capital of Despair," 632.

55 The local newspaper *Kharkovskiie izvestiia* devoted a whole page to a report about the conference. See Valerii Tyrnov, "O tragedii bez spekuliatsii: Byl li genotsydom golod 30-kh godov?" *Kharkovskiie izvestiia*, 25 November 2008; quoted in Zhurzhenko, 633.

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stated.[56] This purported ideological motivation is not supported by the facts. The scope and consequences of the "all-Union" famine differed drastically, so much so that based on the 1926 and 1939 population censuses taken before and after the famine years, the number of Russians in the USSR increased by 28 percent while the number of Ukrainians decreased by 9.9 percent.[57]

The "all-Union" famine argument is promoted in order to deflect attention from the responsibility of the Communist Party and its sentinel the GPU for the genocide committed in Ukraine, and to deny that it was perpetrated against nationally conscious Ukrainians. For scholars brought up in the service of the Communist Party, like the Ukrainian historian Stanislav Kulchytskyi, respected by his Russian colleagues, the "all-Union" famine argument became their historiographic credo. Recently, Kulchytskyi has revised his views and proposed the concept of a "famine within the famine," the Holodomor as a unique phenomenon distinct from the "all-Union" famine.[58] To quote Marochko: "If there was the 'all-Union' famine, where was its epicenter?"[59]

Scholars who focus on the economic causes of the famine ignore the fact that "total collectivization" of farms in Ukraine had been completed by the autumn of 1931 or the spring of 1932 at the latest, much earlier than in Russia. They dismiss arguments of

56 For a summary of the announcement, see "Gosduma ne priznala Holodomor 1932–33 godov: Gosudarstvennaia Duma Rossii otritsaet priznaki genotsyda vo vremia goloda 1932–1933 godov na territorii SSSR," *Delo*, 2 April 2008, https://delo.ua/econonomyandpoliticsinukraine/gosduma-ne-priznala-1932-33-go-75225/ (accessed 14 June 2020); see also Steve Gutterman, "Russia: 1930s Famine Was Not Genocide," *Fox News*, 2 April 2008, https://www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_wires/2008Apr02/0,4675,RussiaUkraineFamine,00.html (accessed 23 May 2020).

57 *International Commission of Inquiry Into the 1932–33 Famine in Ukraine: The Final Report* (Stockholm: Stockholm Institute of Public and International Law, no. 109, 1990), 2; available at https://web.archive.org/web/20081001225745/http://www.ukrainianworldcongress.org/Holodomor/Holodomor-Commission.pdf (accessed 28 May 2020).

58 Stanislav Kulchytsky, *The Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine: An Anatomy of the Holodomor*, trans. Ali Kinsella (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 2018), 140.

59 Vasyl Marochko, "Prystrasti dovkola Holodomoru: realni mify," *Dzerkalo tyzhnia*, 24 March 2018, https://dt.ua/HISTORY/pristrasti-dovkola-golodomoru-realni-mifi-272997_.html (accessed 29 May 2020).

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James Mace, who pointed out that the famine ravaged the republic after the harvest was collected in the autumn of 1932 through the winter and spring of 1933. The fact that the 1934 crop, substantially smaller than that of 1932, did not lead to famine (because quotas were lowered and grain was released from state stockpiles), means that in 1932, famine could also have been averted, had the central authorities in Moscow wished to avert it.[60]

The crux of the matter is that Stalin employed both non-lethal and lethal means to achieve his goal. The non-lethal means included silencing the truth about the famine, propaganda in the press, and political literacy campaigns designed to ideologically subvert Ukraine's population. The lethal means included special operations of the GPU to eliminate nationally conscious intellectuals[61] and to suppress uprisings in the countryside that threatened to topple the Soviet regime.[62]

The elimination of the nationally conscious intelligentsia through GPU special operations in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, the "brain" of the nation in Lemkin's terms, resulted in thousands of deaths and enormous cultural disruption in Ukraine. In 1929, the GPU arrested 30,000 intellectuals, writers, scientists, and teachers for their alleged participation in the fictitious organization Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (known by its Ukrainian abbreviation as SVU, or *Spilka Vyzvolennia Ukrainy),* fabricated by the GPU to intimidate the rest of the population into submission. In the

60 James Mace, "Research on Documents" (typewritten notes), Ukraine Famine Hearing, 30 April 1987, Box 16921, Gary Bauer Files, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum.

61 For a discussion about the Soviet repressions against Ukraine's intellectuals in the 1930s and their eventual extermination, see Olga Bertelsen and Myroslav Shkandrij, "The Secret Police and the Campaign against Galicians in Soviet Ukraine, 1929–34," *Nationalities Papers*: *The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 42, no. 1 (2014): 37–62; Myroslav Shkandrij and Olga Bertelsen, "The Soviet Regime's National Operations in Ukraine, 1929–1934," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* LV, nos. 3–4 (2013): 417–47.

62 In 1930, the GPU recorded 4,098 uprisings in the Ukrainian SSR. There were significantly more disturbances in Ukraine than in three other grain growing regions of the Central Black Earth (1,373), the North Caucasus (1,061), and the Lower Volga (1,003). See *The War Against the Peasantry, 1927–1930: The Tragedy of the Soviet Countryside*, eds. Lynne Viola, V. P. Danilov, N. A. Ivnitskii, and Denis Kozlov (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 320.

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spring of 1930, on Shevchenko's birthday, forty-five of them were put on trial in the Kharkiv Opera House; their sentence was read on Easter Sunday, barely giving the defense enough time to read over two hundred volumes of concocted case files.[63]

Among the arrested were leading Ukrainian historians. Serhii Yefremov, vice-president of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences' governing council and secretary of its historical-philological division, was accused of being the leader of the SVU and was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment. Like Yefremov, Yosyp Hermaize (of Jewish ancestry), the secretary of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences' historical division, was vilified in the press ahead of the show trial, and, as soon as the trial ended, was exiled to a labor camp on the Solovetskyi Islands in the White Sea in northern Russia. Professor Hrushevskyi was exiled to Moscow, and in 1934 returned to Ukraine in a coffin, a lethal outcome of a minor surgery.[64]

While the crème of the crème of the old Ukrainian intelligentsia, the living symbols of Ukraine's struggle for independence, were prosecuted at the SVU trial, preparations were made to crack down on the opponents of the regime in the villages. A secret resolution of 30 January 1930 "On Measures to Liquidate Kulak Households in Districts with Total Collectivization" spelled out methods of destruction in three stages. The first category comprised leading opponents of the regime, subject to immediate liquidation by imprisonment in concentration camps or execution. Those assigned to the second category were to be deported from Ukraine to far-off areas in the Russian Far North and Far East with a stipulation to never return to their homeland. People who fell into the third category were to be resettled on the worst land outside the collectivized

63 V. I. Prystaiko, and Yu. I. Shapoval, *Sprava "Spilky Vyzvolennia Ukrainy": nevidomi dokumenty i fakty* (Kyiv: Intel, 1995), 44, 413.

64 Professor Yefremov died in a Russian prison in 1939, three months before the end of his prison term. After his release in 1934, Hermaize was rearrested in 1937 and died in a labor camp after his sentence was extended for an additional ten years. See Matthew D. Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923–1934* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 351, 356.

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villages.[65] Those who joined armed uprisings automatically lost their land ownership and were stripped of their citizenship rights.

Additional methods that led to lethal outcomes included special resolutions with instructions, drafted by Stalin, for executive committees on specific measures to put collective farms and independent farmers on blacklists (these included a series of measures, such as the suspension of trade and credit and the removal of all produce from stores).[66] Within a month, the targets for blacklisting became not only collective farms as units of socialist economy or village soviets as administrative units, but entire villages. "This, beyond doubt, underscores that the goal of the Bolshevik policy was not the fulfillment of the grain procurement plan (it was an excuse), but the creation for all the village residents of conditions incompatible with life," noted Heorhii Papakin.[67] Eventually, as of January 1933, the Ukrainian SSR as a whole was secretly blacklisted.[68] As the authorities requisitioned all grain and brutally confiscated everything edible, they simultaneously closed the borders around Ukraine and the ethnically Ukrainian Kuban in the North Caucasus and banned travel to Russian regions (Central Black Earth, the Lower Volga, and Moscow), as well as Belarus, to procure food.[69] Population movement was controlled by special military detachments and the GPU personnel that patrolled the area.[70]

The assault on Ukrainian intellectuals from the late 1920s to early 1930s, as well as on Ukrainian clergy and farmers, constituted

65 Kulchytsky, *The Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine*, 32.

66 See Resolution of the CC CP(B)U Politburo "On Measures to Strengthen Grain Procurement," 18 November 1932, in *Holodomor of 1932–33 in Ukraine: Documents and Materials*, ed. Ruslan Pyrih, trans. Stephen Bandera (Kyiv: Kyiv Mohyla Academy Publishing House, 2008), 55–60.

67 Heorhii Papakin, "'Chorna doshka' Holodomoru i liudski vtraty 1932–1933 rokiv," in *Materialy Mizhnarodnoi naukovo-praktychnoi konferentsii "Holodomor 1932–1933 rokiv: vtraty ukrainskoi natsii" (Kyiv, 4 October 2016)*, eds. Olesia Stasiuk, Vasyl Marochko, Volodymyr Serhiichuk, et al. (Kyiv: National Museum "Memorial of the Victims of the Holodomor," 2017), 160.

68 Kulchytsky, *The Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine*, 149.

69 Serbyn, "The Ukrainian Famine of 1932–1933," 187.

70 Papakin, "'Chorna doshka' Holodomoru," 162.

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what Raphael Lemkin later would identify as genocide.[71] The demographic composition of Ukrainian villages was changed when Russian veterans and loyalists with their families were settled in the areas depopulated by the 1932–1933 famine. The memories of horrid experiences of starvation, deaths, and displacement haunted those who survived the Holodomor for decades. With the rehabilitation of Stalinism in Putin's Russia, an old mix of lethal and nonlethal means is being redeployed to inspire supporters and fool critics of what analysts dub as a "new generation" warfare.[72]

Covering Up the Losses

The most effective tactic in the Russian disinformation warfare is diminishing the scale of the Ukrainian genocidal famine of 1932–1933. Russian scholars estimate Holodomor losses in Soviet Ukraine as follows: Elena Osokina[73]—2.7 million, Viktor Danilov and Ilia Zelenin[74]—3.5 million, Viktor Kondrashin[75]—3.5 million, and Sergei Maksudov[76]—4.5 million. These scholars use the 1926 population census and the repressed 1937 census figures in the USSR, but ignore the fact that Ukrainians became famine victims beyond the borders of the republic, in grain growing regions of the North Caucasus, the Central Black Earth, the Lower Volga, and

71 Raphael Lemkin, *Soviet Genocide in the Ukraine* (Kingston, Ontario: Kashtan Press, 2014).

72 Nicholas Fedyk, "Russian 'New Generation' Warfare—Theory, Practice, and Lessons for U.S. Strategists," *Small Wars Journal*, 25 August 2016, https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/russian-"new-generation"-warfare-theory-practice-and-lessons-for-us-strategists (accessed 26 May 2020).

73 E. A. Osokina, "Zhertvy goloda 1933 g.: skolko ikh? (Analiz demograficheskoi statistiki TsGANKh SSSR)," *Istoriia SSSR,* no. 5 (1991): 18–26; also available at *Webarchive*, 29 September 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20070929204317/http://www.auditorium.ru/books/4522/ch2.pdf (accessed 23 May 2020).

74 V. P. Danilov and I. Ye. Zelenin, "Organizovannyi golod. K 70-letiiu obshchekrestianskoi tragedii," *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 5 (2004): 97–111.

75 V. V. Kondrashin, "Golod 1932–1933 gg.—obshchaia tragediia narodov SSSR: natsionalno-regionalnyi aspect," in *Sovetskiie natsii i natsionalnaia politika v 1920–1950-e gody: Materialy VI mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii, Kiev, 10–12 oktiabria 2013 g.*, ed. N. Volynchik (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2014), 195.

76 Sergei Maksudov (Aleksandr Babionyshev), "Byl li golod 1932–33 godov na Ukraine genotsydom?," *Blog Sergeia Maksudova*, 16 September 2016, http://www.maksudovsergei.com/ (accessed 23 May 2020).

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even Kazakhstan. Based on the 1926 census, there were 5,805,522 Ukrainians in the European part of the Russian SFSR. Of these, 3,106,852 lived in the North Caucasus, where they constituted 37.1 percent of the population. The percentages varied from 0.1 in the southern regions to 61.5 in the Kuban district (Krasnodar region) in the northwest. A further 1,078,552 Ukrainians lived in the Voronezh region (32.6 percent of the population).[77] Although demographers have examined regional differences in demographic losses in Ukraine and Russia,[78] so far there is no systematic study providing a breakdown of the population that died from the famine in the Russian SFSR that would allow us to know how many Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, Tatars, and people of other ethnic groups fell victims to the famine.

Demographers ignore primary sources that were compiled during the 1930s in Ukraine, among them statistical reports from commissariats of health, education, civil registries, security police reports, and regional and central statistical bureau records. For over eighty years, interrogation files of chief demographer Oleksandr Asatkin have been stored in vaults of the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine, coming to light decades too late.[79] As early as 1935, Asatkin expressed his concern over the peak of mortality observed in 1933. In his note addressed to the leadership of the Republic's Communist Party, he presented figures on changes in the population of Ukraine between 1926 and 1934. On 2 September 1937, he was executed for allegedly "falsifying" the census because his staff failed to reach the projected 35 million and reported 27.9 million, a population loss of 7.1 million in Ukraine.[80]

77 Tymish Olesevych, *Statystychni tablytsi ukrainskoho naselennia SSRR za perepysom 17 hrudnia 1926 roku* (Warsaw: Ukrainskyi naukovyi instytut, 1930); quoted in Bohdan S. Kordan, "A Note on the Political Geography of the Great Famine of 1932–1933," in *Holodomor*, eds. Luciuk and Grekul, 29.

78 Nataliia Levchuk, Oleh Wolowyna, Omelian Rudnytskyi, Alla Kovbasiuk, and Natalia Kulyk, "Regional 1932–1933 Famine Losses: A Comparative Analysis of Ukraine and Russia," *Nationalities Papers* (2020): 1–21, doi: 10.1017/nps.2019.55.

79 Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhby bezpeky Ukrainy (HDA SBU), f. 6, spr. 43187-FP, vol. 1, ark. 19, 91–92.

80 V. I. Marochko, "O. M. Asatkin—vyhadanyi 'falsyfikator' perepysu naselennia 1937 r.," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, no. 4 (2017): 147, 149.

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A few weeks before the unveiling of the United States Memorial to the Victims of the Holodomor on 7 November 2015 in Washington, D.C., five leaders of Ukrainian research institutions in North America appealed to the chairman of the organizing committee, Michael Sawkiw, Jr., with a request not to use the figure over 7 million victims as has been known in the Ukrainian diaspora but instead use 3.9 million as a "consensus" figure. Otherwise, they warned, "it will cause protests in certain anti-Ukrainian circles, and will be used immediately by the Kremlin propagandists to discredit Ukrainian science for incompetence."[81] In their desire to appear unbiased and fair-minded, a group of Ukrainian demographers and their North American colleagues perpetuate the underestimated number of victims, insisting that there is no alternative to demographic methods.[82] It seems prudent to offer this letter in its entirety:

> Text of the Letter to Michael Sawkiw, Jr., Chairman
> U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor Genocide Awareness
> 1 September 2015
>
> Dear Mr. Sawkiw,
>
> We, the presidents or directors of the five major Ukrainian academic institutions and associations in North America, are writing to you and the members of the U.S. Holodomor Commission about a very important matter.
>
> It has come to our attention that the website of the U.S. Holodomor Committee provides the number of Ukrainian deaths in the Holodomor as being 7–10 million. Please be apprised of the fact that this estimate traces back to journalist accounts from the 1930s. All serious academic estimates performed by reputable demographers in Ukraine and the West place the death toll in the 3–5 million range. These figures are accepted by the leading historians in the field, from Andrea Graziosi to Tim Snyder and Stanislav Kulchytsky. The figure of 3.9 million victims of the Holodomor served as

81 See the 1 September 2015 collective email signed by Vitaly A. Chernetsky, George Grabowicz, Albert Kipa, Volodymyr Kravchenko, and Serhii Plokhii re: "Holodomor Memorial" to Michael Sawkiw, Jr., Chairman of the U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor Genocide Awareness, cited in Volodymyr Serhiichuk, "How Millions of Deaths Were Not Included in the Statistics," *Genocide-Holodomor of Ukrainians, 1932–1933* (Vyshhorod: PP Serhiichuk M. I., 2018), 112.

82 Omelian Rudnytskyi, Nataliia Levchuk, Oleh Wolowyna, Pavlo Shevchuk, and Alla Kovbasiuk, "Demography of a Man-made Human Catastrophe: The Case of Massive Famine in Ukraine, 1932–1933," *Canadian Studies in Population* 42, no. 1–2 (2015): 53–80.

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the basis for the ruling of the Ukrainian court on the perpetrators of the Holodomor in January 2010, during the last weeks of Viktor Yushchenko's presidency.

Problematic are also figures provided by the website on the dynamics of the Holodomor in Ukraine and the number of children who died in the famine. The website states that "By the end of 1933, nearly 25% of the population of Ukraine, including three million children, had perished." Taking into account the data provided by a group of Ukrainian and U.S. demographers, a much more accurate statement would read as follows. "By the end of 1933, about 17% of the population of Ukraine, including nearly one million children under the age of ten, had perished."

We strongly urge you to change the estimate on the website accordingly. This is vitally important for several reasons:

1) The 4 million estimate, as well as the other two figures, are based on sound demographical and statistical analysis. Such scholarship should not be ignored or treated lightly, as it rests on far more persuasive methodological foundations than journalistic estimates.

2) The 7–10 million figure will elicit a storm of protest from negatively disposed non-Ukrainian sources, with the typical accusation being that it is meant to exceed the death toll in the Holocaust. Such criticism will only divert attention from the tragedy of the Holodomor.

3) The 7–10 million figure will play directly into the hands of Kremlin propagandists, who will claim that, just as the figure is unjustifiably high, so is the treatment of the Ukrainian tragedy as genocide. To provide the Kremlin with such propaganda ammunition at a time of the war in Ukraine strikes us as unwise. The first attack has been already launched:

http://sputniknews.com/politics/20150809/1025560345.html#ixzz3iXdnBIyY

We appreciate and salute your and your colleagues' success in making the U.S. Holodomor Monument a reality, and hope that our arguments will convince you to provide more correct figures on the web site, as well as on the planned plaque for the monument.

Respectfully,

Vitaly Chernetsky, President
American Association for Ukrainian Studies

George Grabowicz, President
Shevchenko Scientific Society

Albert Kipa, President
Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the US

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Volodymyr Kravchenko, Director
Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies

Serhii Plokhii, Director
Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute[83]

Ukrainian historians, among them Vasyl Marochko and Volodymyr Serhiichuk, have proposed an interdisciplinary approach that builds on methodologies used in history and anthropology at the crossroads with demography to account for all the victims on the "territory of the Holodomor."[84] These encompass not only those who starved to death in the fields and villages, but also members of various professions who were persecuted, lost jobs and consequently were deprived of any means to survive, the cannibals who suffered extreme mental anguish and turned to beastly behavior killing wives, husbands, or children to quiet hunger, the innocent prisoners of the GPU labor camps who died from overwork and starvation rations in Russian permafrost, the orphaned children who died from neglect and malnutrition without their names being recorded and the cause of death cynically listed as "Ukrainian."[85]

On the very documents that were meant to record cause of death, the local offices of ZAGS (Registry of Vital Statistics) were instructed not to list famine as a cause of death, but to substitute any of a number of approved diseases.[86] Hennadii Boriak, then head of the State Committee on Archives in Ukraine, found documents with instructions and a death certificate that had originally listed famine as cause of death, but later visibly "corrected" to "unknown."[87] Doctors, who were state employees, put down all sorts of diseases as the causes of death, including "sudden illness." By the winter of 1932–1933 death certificates no longer appeared. Not only were causes of death altered and death certificates forged, but ZAGS records from the fatal years were sanitized in local offices. A

83 The 1 September 2015 collective email to Michael Sawkiw, Jr.

84 Vasyl Marochko, *Terytoriia Holodomoru 1932–1933 rr.* (Kyiv: PP Natalia Brekhunenko, 2014).

85 V. I. Marochko, "Statystyka zhertv Holodomoru: antropolohichno-demohrafichnyi dyskurs," *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, no. 5 (2017): 112–32.

86 Hennadii Boriak, *Sources for the Study of the Great Famine in Ukraine* (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Studies Fund, 2009), 3.

87 State Archives of Kyiv Oblast (DAKO), f. 5634, op. 1, spr. 969, ark. 86; quoted in Boriak, *Sources for the Study of the Great Famine in Ukraine*, 22.

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significant part of the documents related to the registration of illnesses and deaths in hospitals and village councils was destroyed immediately, "while still hot." A top secret instruction, dated 13 April 1934, from the Odesa Regional Executive Committee (with copies to all lower-level executive committees and inspectors of the National Economic Survey Administration, later the Central Statistical Board) is remarkable evidence of how the crimes against the Ukrainians were covered up by the perpetrators.[88] As a result, according to Boriak, "the extant vital statistics registers for the years of 1932–1933 in the state archives contain no more than 3 million deaths, which represents *a maximum of one-third* of the territory afflicted by the famine."[89] Scholars believe that the archival records were purposefully and systematically destroyed by the regime for decades.[90] Thus, erasing the record of memory was a crucial part of Stalin's war against Ukraine then as it is now a crucial part of Putin's information warfare, in the same battlespace—the mind.

88 The top secret instructions regarding withdrawal of death record books for the years of 1932–1933 from the local civil registry (ZAGS) archives of the Odesa oblast into classified storage at the district executive committees, dated April 1934, was located in State Archives of Odesa Oblast (DAOO), f. R-2009, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 91–92; quoted in Boriak, *Sources for the Study of the Great Famine in Ukraine*, 28–35.

89 Boriak, *Sources for the Study of the Great Famine in Ukraine*, 21. See also Hennadii Boriak, "Population Losses in the Holodomor and the Destruction of Related Archives: New Archival Evidence," in *After the Holodomor: The Enduring Impact of the Great Famine on Ukraine*, eds. Andrea Graziosi, Lubomyr A. Hajda, and Halyna Hryn (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainians Research Institute of Harvard University, 2013), 204; originally published in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 30, nos. 1–4 (2008): 199–215.

90 Niels Erik Rosenfeldt argues that there were three waves of purges of Soviet archival documents: in 1929–1930, 1937–1938, and during the summer of 1941 on the eve of the German invasion of the Soviet Union. See Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, *The "Special" World: Stalin's Power Apparatus and the Soviet System's Secret Structures of Communication*, trans. Sally Laird and John Kendal (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2009), 1: 88–93. Boriak argues that after the re-evacuation of archives in 1945, inventories conducted in 1949, 1955, 1957, 1962, 1965, and 1968 led to thousands of records for the period of 1928–1935 being deliberately destroyed. According to Boriak, "Stalin's regime left just half of the aggregate archives on the Holodomor created at all levels of government." See Boriak, "Population Losses in the Holodomor," 207–12.

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Criminalizing Holodomor Studies

While targeting Ukraine's information space, Russia is protecting its own by silencing the truth about the past, thus undermining justice. On 1 December 2011, the Meshchanskii district court in Moscow declared books written by Vasyl Marochko, a Ukrainian historian and president of the Board of Directors of the Association for Holodomor Studies, "extremist" and ordered them to be removed from the shelves of the Ukrainian Library in Moscow.[91] In December 2014, the municipal court in Russian-occupied Feodosia in Crimea charged the director of the library for storing extremist literature (Article 20.20 of the Russian Criminal Code) and imposed a fine in the amount of 2,000 rubles for storing a dozen books in Ukrainian, including Marochko's books on the Holodomor, in two municipal libraries. These books are scholarly publications that were written between 2007 and 2014 based on the analysis of new documentary evidence from the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine and other state and former Communist Party archives. In the Russian legal system, books about the Holodomor, which is a crime against humanity, are criminalized and erased from history and memory.[92]

Upon hearing the news, Marochko drew parallels to the days of Stalinism in an open letter posted on the Institute of History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences website, saying that "[i]n the 1930s books were banned by entire lists: books were simply repressed, occasionally burned. Looks like this practice is coming back …" In his article about the "Russian World" in Feodosiia, Marochko compared book burning to burning of "brother Slavs" on the battlefields of occupied Crimea and Donbas: "all of

91 Vasyl Marochko, "'Russkii Mir' u Feodosii: zaborona slova pro Holodomor," *Istorychna Pravda*, 28 January 2015, http://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2015/01/28/146975/ (accessed 23 May 2020).

92 A list of materials deemed extremist is published on the website of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. It has expanded from 14 titles in 2007 to 1,271 titles in 2012. See "V Rosii knyhy pro Holodomor pryrivniuiutsia do ekstremizmu," *Istorychna Pravda*, 27 June 2012, http://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2012/06/27/89363/ (accessed 23 May 2020).

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these are consequences of the rehabilitation of Stalinism, the Holodomor denial, and the revision of the past."[93]

Russia has banned scholarly publications that examined the GPU's role in the Holodomor, deflecting attention from the institution that has perpetrated the crime of genocide but has never been held accountable. Among works included in the list of "extremist" literature is an influential volume on the history of the Soviet security police entitled *ChK-GPU-NKVD v Ukraini: Osoby. Fakty. Dokumenty.* It has been authored by Yurii Shapoval, Volodymyr Prystaiko, and Vadym Zolotariov and has been referenced by scholars of Stalinism and Stalin's security apparatus since its publication in 1997. Together with Marochko's books, the 2011 Moscow court verdict criminalized this scholarly publication in an attempt to control the official historical narrative promoted in Russia. Analyzing the interconnectedness of the preceding Soviet and modern Russian methods of control over history writing, Olga Bertelsen pointed out that central to these memory politics are an anti-Ukrainian discourse, ideological subversion, and the cult of *chekists*.[94]

The ban on books was accompanied by an assault on the rights of the Ukrainian minority in Russia. In 2011, the Russian authorities dissolved the Federal Cultural Association of Ukrainians, and in 2012 the Union of Ukrainians, two organizations that represented the interests of all Ukrainians in the Russian Federation. More recently, in July 2019, the Office of the Prosecutor General and the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation declared the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) an "undesirable" organization and banned its activities in Russia.[95] The anti-Ukrainian stance of Russian memory politics has emerged as a central feature of the "Russian World" that Putin is building.

The Kremlin's course is rather aggressive and anti-Ukrainian, as it was in the 1930s, when the "crushing blow" to Ukrainian na-

93 Marochko, "'Russkii Mir' u Feodosii."

94 Olga Bertelsen, "A Trial *in Absentia*: Purifying National Historical Narratives in Russia," *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal,* no. 3 (2016): 57–87.

95 UWC, "UWC Defends Itself against Ban in Russian Federation," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 26 April 2020, pp. 1, 5.

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tionalism was piloted in the North Caucasus in November 1932 before it hit the core of the "national spirit" in Ukraine, synchronized with the grain procurement campaign.[96] On 15 December 1932, Stalin and Molotov signed a resolution to "immediately discontinue Ukrainization" in the Far East Region, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, the Central Black Earth, and other areas and "prepare the introduction of Russian language school instruction" in all ethnically Ukrainian areas throughout the USSR.[97] At the same time the Soviet leaders imposed a domestic and international information blockade on the famine in Ukraine.[98]

The "blockade decree" of 22 January 1933[99] established a ghetto,[100] from which starving old and young could not escape. Blame for what happened was placed on the victims. In November 1933, "local Ukrainian nationalism" was declared to be the pre-eminent danger to Soviet power in the region.[101] In January 1934, at the Seventeenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Pavel Postyshev gloated, "the past year [1933] was the year

96 Oleksiy Kurinnyi, "Holodomor 1932–1933 rr. na Pivnichnomu Kavkazi iak henotsyd ukraintsiv," in *Materialy Mizhnarodnoi naukovo-praktychnoi konferentsii "Holodomor 1932–1933 rokiv: vtraty ukrainskoi natsii" (Kyiv, 4 October 2016)*, eds. Olesia Stasiuk, Vasyl Marochko, Volodymyr Serhiichuk, et al. (Kyiv: National Museum "Memorial of the Victims of the Holodomor," 2017), 73–85.

97 See the 15 December 1932 resolution of the CC AUCP(B) and SNK USSR "On Ukrainization in DVK, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, TsChO and Other Areas of the USSR"; quoted in Pyrih, *Holodomor of 1932–33 in Ukraine*, 68–69.

98 Arthur Koestler, "Soviet Myth and Reality," *The Yogi and the Commissar and Other Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), 137–39.

99 Credit must be given to Nikolai Ivnitskii from the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who was the first to bring up a detailed analysis of this document from the Russian archives at the 1993 international conference on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the tragedy. See Nikolai Ivnitskii, "Golod 1932–1933 gg.: kto vinovat? (Po dokumentam 'Kremlevskogo arkhiva')," in *Holodomor 1932–1933 rr. v Ukraini: prychyny i naslidky. Mizhnarodna naukova konferentsiia. Kyiv, 9–10 veresnia 1993: materialy*, ed. S. Kulchytskyi (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NAN Ukrainy, 1995), 43.

100 Marochko, *Terytoriia Holodomoru 1932–1933 rr.*, 11.

101 P. P. Postyshev, "The Results of the Agricultural Year 1933 and the Immediate Tasks of the Communist Party of the Ukraine" (Speech delivered at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, 19 November 1933), in *Soviet Ukraine Today* (New York: International Publishers, 1934), 95. The English text has been preserved in the National University Kyiv-Mohyla Academy's James E. Mace Library and Museum Archives, od. zb. 819.

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of defeat of the nationalist counterrevolution …"[102] Not incidentally, Postyshev's speech about the breakthrough on the grain procurement front that devolved into scapegoating of Ukrainian "bourgeois nationalists," as well as Kossior's speech on the national question, were published in a separate brochure by the International Publishers in New York in English translation with the aim of convincing not only Western observers but even Ukrainians abroad that Bolshevik policies were victorious. Thus, the Soviet disinformation campaign killed two birds with one stone, domestically and internationally. Today the Russian information warfare follows the same logic, targeting domestic trust in the governmental institutions and international perceptions of Ukraine and its history.

Revanche of the Pro-Russian Forces

The battlefield of Russia's hybrid war is the minds of the enemy's armed forces and its civilian population. Putin's attempts to dismantle the Ukrainian Armed Forces during ex-President Yanukovych's term, from 2010 to 2014, when generals in charge of Ukraine's army and security agencies coordinated their actions with Russia's top military leaders,[103] partially succeeded. Russia gained 7 percent of Ukraine's territory, but failed to win in the "cognitive space."[104] In 2014, when Ukraine had a near-death experience, losing almost 30 percent of its GDP with only $15,000 dollars equivalent left in the government's bank accounts, the protesters on the Euromaidan defended Ukraine's pro-European choice.[105] That

102 Pavel Postyshev, "Speech delivered at the Seventeenth Congress of the AUCP(B), 27 January 1934" (excerpts translated by Bohdan Klid), in *The Holodomor Reader: A Sourcebook on the Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine*, edited by Bohdan Klid and Alexander J. Motyl (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 2012), 268.

103 Midttun, "Hybrid War in Ukraine—Predictions for 2019 and Beyond."

104 Hans Petter Midttun, "What If? Hybrid War and Consequences for Europe (Part 1)," *Euromaidan Press*, 6 March 2020, http://euromaidanpress.com/2020/03/06/what-if-hybrid-war-and-consequences-for-europe-part-1/ (accessed 27 May 2020).

105 Daniel Bilak, "Why Investors Are Giving Ukraine a Second Chance," *Atlantic Council*, 17 April 2017, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-investors-are-giving-ukraine-a-second-chance/ (accessed 29 May 2020).

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year, the EU and its European Bank for Reconstruction and Development initiated a Ukraine Reforms Architecture (URA) project.[106] The URA initiative helped Ukraine to achieve macroeconomic stabilization and to transform its Public Administration sector, tax system, energy sector, and to some extent its judiciary.[107] All with less than $10 billion in direct assistance from the EU—during this same period Greece received a bail out of almost €300 billion. No country the size of Ukraine has attempted reforms on this scale. Economists have calculated that by 2018 corruption prevention efforts of the government since 2015 had saved the Ukrainian treasury $6 billion, or 6 percent of GDP, while Ukraine managed to fight an unprovoked war, which drained Ukraine's GDP by 5 percent.[108] Ukraine has survived the Russian military onslaught. However, the goal of Russia's hybrid war is not the complete physical destruction of the country or permanent occupation of its territory, which is costly; it seeks to weaken and subdue Ukraine by non-military means.

In its disinformation warfare, Russia has a reliable force within Ukraine: a cohort of "fighters on the ideological front" or historians brought up under the Soviet paradigm of history writing,

106 For more information about the URA project, see PowerPoint presentation by Bojana Reiner, "Project Showcase—Ukraine Reforms Architecture (URA)," 26 March 2018; the link is available from the EBRD news article by Nigina Mirbabaeva, "Voices of Reform: Ukraine Reforms Architecture Injects Fresh Talent into the Country's Governance Landscape," *EBRD*, 28 March 2018, https://www.ebrd.com/news/2018/voices-of-reform-ukraine-reforms-architecture-injects-fresh-talent-into-the-countrys-governance-landscape.html (accessed 27 May 2020).

107 The URA project has been supported by the EBRD's Ukraine Stabilisation and Sustainable Growth Multi-Donor Account (MDA). The MDA donors are Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union, the largest donor.

108 The statistical information was compiled by an analytical team at UkraineInvest from various sources and shared by Daniel Bilak via email to a group of Ukrainian lawyers and business leaders Re: Presidential Elections and Reform, 27 January 2019. In 2016, Daniel Bilak, a Canadian-educated lawyer, was appointed Director of UkraineInvest and Chief Investment Adviser to the Prime Minister of Ukraine.

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poignantly characterized by Yaroslav Kalakura as *Homo Soveticus*.[109] The species catered to the regime and served the Communist Party, interpreting and justifying its policies. They have discarded the Holodomor as genocide as readily as they discarded their Communist mantle. Kulchytskyi's student, Heorhii Kasianov, veils his denial behind the peculiar term of the "politics of history."[110] It is no coincidence that his critique of the recognition of the Holodomor as genocide against the Ukrainian national group by Ukrainian lawmakers was penned and published when a pro-Russian faction, the Party of Regions, and its leader Viktor Yanukovych came to power.[111] After his inauguration, the then Ukrainian President deleted the link to the Holodomor on the President's official website.[112] Furthermore, on 27 April 2010, Yanukovych went before the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and engaged in the denial of the Holodomor as genocide.[113]

Another tactic in this hybrid war is discrediting Ukrainian historians through their coopted colleagues. In January 2017, a group of Ukrainian historians attended a meeting at the invitation of the Finnish National Committee of the International Association "Historians without Borders" in Helsinki, where they discussed their views on the conceptual differences between Russian and Ukrainian historiographies. Kasianov sent a letter of protest to Helsinki and publicly denounced the four scholars, among them his colleague from the Institute of History of Ukraine at the National Academy of Sciences Viktor Danylenko, the section head from the

109 Yaroslav Kalakura, "Kompleks 'sovkovosti' postradianskoi istoriohrafii," *Ukraina – Evropa – Svit: Mizhnarodnyi zbirnyk naukovykh prats*, vol. 2 (Ternopil: Vyd-vo TNPU named after V. Hnatiuk, 2015), 163–74.

110 Georgiy Kasianov, "The Great Famine of 1932–1933 (Holodomor) and the Politics of History in Contemporary Ukraine," in *Postdiktatorische Geschichtskulturen im Süden und Osten Europas*, eds. Stefan Troebst and Susan Baumgartl (Göttingen, Germany: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 619–41.

111 Heorhii Kasianov, *Dance macabre: holod 1932–1933 rokiv u politytsi, masovii svidomosti ta istoriohrafii (1980–ti – pochatok 2000–kh)* (Kyiv: Int-t istorii Ukrainy NAN Ukrainy, 2010).

112 Alexander J. Motyl, "Deleting the Holodomor: Ukraine Unmakes Itself," *World Affairs* 173, no. 3 (2010): 25–33.

113 "Yanukovich: massovyi golod v SSSR v proshlom veke nelzia schitat genotsydom ukrainskogo naroda," *Interfax-Russia*, 27 April 2010, https://www.interfax.ru/russia/134454 (accessed 23 May 2020).

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Mykhailo Hrushevskyi Institute of Ukrainian Archeology Ihor Hyrych, the dean from the Mykhailo Drahomanov National Pedagogical University Bohdan Andrusyshyn, and the department chair from the Taras Shevchenko National University Volodymyr Serhiichuk. When Professor Fedir Turchenko censured Kasianov for his rant on social media, the latter responded that no one authorized the four Ukrainian historians to speak on his behalf as a Ukrainian historian and that he disagreed with "at minimum half of the nonsense" that they discussed with their Finnish colleagues. Kasianov described the four Ukrainian historians with vulgar epithets: "trash," "unprofessional," and tinged with the "sauce of patriotism."[114]

What might have prompted this outburst by a Ukrainian scholar against his colleagues? Following Kasianov's personal and professional connections leads in an intriguing direction. He has appeared as a guest speaker at an event sponsored by the Russian public organization entitled the "Council on Foreign and Defense Policy" (*Sovet po Vneshnei i Oboronnoi Politike*, abbreviated as SVOP), an organization established by the Federal Security Service in 1992 with the explicit goal to study and shape public opinion favorable to Russia among academics and broader audiences.[115] At the 14 May 2020 webinar sponsored by SVOP, Kasianov appeared with Aleksei Miller, a historian from the European University in St. Petersburg and a SVOP board member, and several other Russian historians on a panel entitled "Memory Wars: Truce in the Time of the Quarantine?,"[116] where he mocked the efforts of Ukrainian historians to construct a national historical narrative, purified of Soviet

114 Volodymyr Serhiichuk, "Os take 'verzinnia' vid tykh, koho ne vzialy za kordon," *Natsiia i derzhava,* no. 3 (646), March 2017, p. 8; also available at https://ia800901.us.archive.org/25/items/NiD_newspaper/646--31--03--2017--03.pdf (accessed 3 June 2020).

115 For more on the history of the organization, its charter (*ustav*) that explicitly states the objectives of Russian active measures, and its cooperation with Russia's Presidential Administration, see the official website of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy at http://svop.ru/about/. Many of the organization's board members are sons and daughters of former KGB associates, who headed major Soviet cultural and educational institutions.

116 See the video of the webinar at *SVOP*, 23 May 2020, http://svop.ru/meeting/33123/ (accessed 3 June 2020).

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lies. Kasianov and Miller have shared similar views about Ukrainian history and recent events in Ukraine, co-authored several texts, and organized panels at international forums that promoted the Russian strategic narrative and undermined the Ukrainian national narrative.[117]

Recently, pro-Russian forces went on the attack against the organizers of the International Forum "Ukraine Remembers! World Acknowledges!"[118] which brought scholars from fifty countries to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the Holodomor-genocide on 22–24 November 2018. In the midst of the novel coronavirus pandemic, on 15 April 2020, Volodymyr V'iatrovych of the European Solidarity party announced that he was summoned to appear before the State Bureau of Investigation (abbreviated in Ukrainian as DBR)[119] on 28 April 2020 for organizing the forum. In an interview, he publicly denounced this charge as political persecution and the "implementation of the Russian scenario."[120] The charge was filed by Maksym Buzhanskyi of the Servant of the People party, who accused his former colleague of "abuse of power" (conviction carries with it a term of 5 to 8 years of imprisonment) and "embezzlement of state funds allocated for the organization of the forum."[121] The

117 See for instance, Georgii Kasianov and Aleksei Miller, *Rossiia-Ukraina: Kak Pishetsia Istoriia* (Moscow: RGGU, 2011) and Wolfram Dornik, Georgiy Kasianov, Hannes Leidinger, Peter Lieb, Aleksei Miller, and Bogdan Musial, *Die Ukraine: zwischen Selbstbestimmung und Fremdherrschaft 1917–22* (Leykam, 2011).

118 See an overview of the forum and links to video recordings of selected presentations: "Mizhnarodnyi forum 'Ukraina pam'iataie, svit vyznaie,' do 85-kh rokovyn Holodomoru," *Ukrainskyi Instytut Natsionalnoi Pam'iati* (Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance), 2020, https://old.uinp.gov.ua/news/mizhnarodnii-forum-ukraina-pam-yatae-svit-viznae-do-85-kh-rokovin-golodomoru-pidsumki (accessed 24 May 2020).

119 The State Bureau of Investigation chief, Oleksandr Babikov, used to be a lawyer of Russia-friendly former President Viktor Yanukovych, who led the Party of Regions before winning the presidential election in February 2010. Mr. Yanukovych was toppled in February 2014 by the Euromaidan protests. He fled to Russia and has been residing there ever since.

120 "'Velychezna koryst dlia Rosii,'—V'iatrovych pro vyklyk na dopyt u DBR," *Novynarnia*, 15 April 2020, https://novynarnia.com/2020/04/15/vyatrovich-dbr/ (accessed 24 May 2020).

121 Liudmyla Klishchuk, "V'iatrovych ide na dopyt u DBR shchodo orhanizatsii mizhnarodnoho forumu pam'iati Holodomoru," *Novynarnia*, 27 April 2020,

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accusation is particularly reprehensible because it aims to criminalize actions of the former director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance who organized the scholarly meeting that raised international awareness about the Holodomor. It is an attempt to discredit and frighten those scholars and intellectuals who speak the truth about the genocidal famine.

The following day, 16 April 2020, the Pechersk district court in Kyiv placed Tetiana Chornovol of the European Solidarity party, led by former President Poroshenko, under house arrest on suspicion of murder during deadly anti-government protests of the Euromaidan revolution (known also as the Revolution of Dignity) in February 2014. She was informed that she was a suspect in the murder of an employee of the office of the pro-Russia Party of Regions. The man died after the party's office in downtown Kyiv was set on fire. Poroshenko criticized the DBR's probe against Chornovol, a former investigative journalist known for her anti-Kremlin stance, calling it "an attempt to rewrite the history under Moscow's orders."[122]

In a chilling example of *déjà vu*, criminal charges were brought against ex-President Poroshenko. The most extraordinary of charges is "action aimed at the violent change or overthrow of the constitutional order or seizing of state power" (Article 109 paragraphs 1, 2 of Ukraine's Criminal Code).[123] Early in March Prosecutor General Ruslan Riaboshapka was dismissed because he refused to sign an indictment against Poroshenko, arguing that the charges were "legal rubbish," unlawful and groundless. Experts worry that the number of criminal investigations against the previous administration, known for its pro-Western stance, has been on the rise. Most of them were prompted by Andrii Portnov, who was deputy

https://novynarnia.com/2020/04/27/vyatrovich-yde-na-dopit-u-dbr/amp/ (accessed 24 May 2020).

122 "Chornovol under House Arrest," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 26 April 2020, p. 2, http://www.ukrweekly.com/uwwp/wp-content/uploads/current-pdf/The_Ukrainian_Weekly_2020-17.pdf (accessed 27 May 2020).

123 "Venediktova vidkryla provadzhennia proty Poroshenka," *UNN*, 8 April 2020, https://www.unn.com.ua/uk/news/1862631-venediktova-vidkrila-provadzhnnya-proti-poroshenka (accessed 28 May 2020).

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head of ex-President Yanukovych's administration during the Euromaidan and returned to Ukraine only on the eve of Volodymyr Zelenskyi's inauguration.[124]

Funding for Holodomor research and commemoration was restored after the Revolution of Dignity that toppled Yanukovych, the Russia-sponsored Holodomor-genocide denier. The new director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, Anton Drobovych, appointed in November 2019, pledged to continue the work of his predecessor and prioritized three tasks for the Institute: (1) completion of the de-communization of Ukraine's space; (2) recognition of the Holodomor as genocide by the international community; and (3) intensification of measures to counter Russian information warfare.[125] The recognition of the Holodomor as genocide by the international community is intertwined with efforts to expunge the legacy of communism from the cognitive space and to combat Russian disinformation.

On 6 May 2020, the participants of the Revolution of Dignity published an open letter warning that under neglect of the authorities, "the pro-Russian forces and agents of the Kremlin" in Ukraine have engaged in revisions of the national historical narrative.[126] The letter was signed by volunteers, civil activists, politicians, diplomats, writers, artists, and intellectuals who stood on the Euromaidan to defend Ukraine from Russian aggression. The signatories of the letter—some two hundred individuals and a dozen organizations—raised their concern that Ukraine's European orientation and chances of EU membership may come to naught. They demanded that the avalanche of fabricated criminal cases against the leaders of the Revolution of Dignity and defenders of Ukraine's freedom cease: "*Revanche* will not pass."

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124 Halya Coynash, "Chilling Déjà Vu in Ukraine as Criminal Charges Are Brought Against Ex-President Poroshenko," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 26 April 2020, p. 6, http://www.ukrweekly.com/uwwp/wp-content/uploads/current-pdf/The_Ukrainian_Weekly_2020-17.pdf (accessed 27 May 2020).

125 "Novyi holova UINP Drobovych nazvav osnovni zavdannia na posadi," *Novynarnia*, 16 December 2019, https://novynarnia.com/2019/12/16/drobovich-nazvav/ (accessed 24 May 2020).

126 "Zvernennia uchasnykiv Revoliutsii Hidnosti proty revanshu," *Tyzhden*, 6 May 2020, https://m.tyzhden.ua/Politics/243374 (accessed 24 May 2020).

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Implications

In Ukraine, the struggle for international recognition of the Holodomor as genocide is a national issue, symbolic of what Czech novelist Milan Kundera called "the struggle of memory over forgetting."[127] In the 1930s, Stalin's policy of Ukrainization, cloaked in the language of modernization and synchronized with the drive for industrialization and collectivization, led to a shift in Ukrainian national identity.[128] In the words of Victor Rud, a board member of the Ukrainian American Bar Association and chairman of its Committee on Foreign Affairs, "[i]n number of victims and destruction of a nation's fiber, psychology, sense of self, in terms of coming to the precipice of destroying a nation, in terms of its effects carrying through and being so manifest eighty years afterward, the Holodomor is without parallel in human history." Rud argues that the Holodomor did not become the catalyst for the founding of the Ukrainian state but rather "interred the idea of Ukrainian independence for generations," warning that its reverberations are felt in Ukraine today: "So much so that, though Ukraine is today nominally independent it is, fundamentally, not a Ukrainian state."[129]

The challenge for Ukraine is Russia's global daily diet of misinformation, disinformation, and outright lies that seek to undermine Ukraine as a viable political state and exploit tensions to destroy society. In Ukraine, ethnic nationalism might not be strong, but civic identity is increasingly consolidated.[130] The danger is that amidst the health crisis caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic, which may further exacerbate the economic crisis, the pro-Russian forces in Ukraine might engage in hounding of Holodomor scholars

127 Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 3.

128 George Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR, 1923–1934* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 170.

129 Victor Rud, "Comments Re: Podcast on the Holodomor at The Pursuit," email message to a group of the Holodomor scholars, 25 February 2020.

130 Hans Petter Midttun, "What If Russia Wins in Ukraine? Consequences of Hybrid War for Europe (Part 2)," *Euromaidan Press*, 22 May 2020, http://euromaidanpress.com/2020/05/22/what-if-russia-wins-in-ukraine-consequences-of-hybrid-war-for-europe-part-2/ (accessed 27 May 2020).

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and persecuting participants of the Revolution of Dignity while silencing the voices of protest. If the current Ukrainian authorities fail to promote a national historical narrative, a foreign and hostile force will attempt to fill the void with a narrative imposed from outside. "Defeat in the history war will automatically mean the loss of national identity. Ultimately, this will lead to the loss of the country itself," warned a Ukrainian lawmaker with the European Solidarity party, Oleksiy Goncharenko.[131]

When a resolution by Russia's State Duma refused to recognize the Holodomor as genocide, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the author of the *Gulag Archipelago*[132] and Nobel Prize laureate, backed the official Russian line, dismissing the notion that the famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine was a genocide by referring to it as a "fable."[133] Ideologically close to Solzhenitsyn and driven by his vision of Russia as a unique "state civilization," Putin openly takes pride in his past as a *chekist*, restoring the old Soviet political police traditions, methods, and values.[134] Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, there are signs that a "new Gulag is emerging in Russia slowly and insidiously."[135] To quote Robert Conquest, "[u]ntil this horrible piece of history is openly exposed and denounced by the successors of Stalin it remains a demonstration of the background against which they made their careers, and of the system as a whole. Until they publicly purge themselves of this guilt, until they break with this horror in their past, they remain not only its heirs, but also its

131 Goncharenko, "Ukraine Cannot Stay Neutral in Putin's History War."

132 *The Gulag Archipelago: An Experiment in Literary Investigation,* a three-volume, non-fiction text written between 1958 and 1968, was first published in 1973 in the West, followed by an English translation in 1974.

133 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Possorit rodnye narody??," *Izvestiia*, 2 April 2008, p. 2.

134 Julie Fedor, *Russia and the Cult of State Security* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 119.

135 Paul Goble, "A New GULAG Is Emerging Just as Stalin's Did Slowly and Insidiously, Gudkov Warns," *Euromaidan Press*, 17 August 2018, http://euromaidanpress.com/2018/08/17/a-new-gulag-is-emerging-just-as-stalins-did-slowly-and-insidiously-gudkov-warns/ (accessed 24 May 2020); on the consistency of Solzhenitsyn's and Putin's views vis-à-vis Russia and Ukraine, see Taras Kuzio's chapter in this volume "Disinformation: Soviet Origins of Contemporary Russian Ukrainophobia."

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accomplices."[136] Unfortunately, repentance for the crimes of their predecessors, called for by Serhii Holovatyi, the Minister of Justice in Ukraine, in a foreword to the *ChK in Ukraine*, goes against the principles of the *chekists*' successors who view it as unnecessary and harmful because it might besmirch their reputation.[137]

Putin is attempting to redefine the world order by imposing his own strategic narrative.[138] This new paradigm has been famously described by the Russian political analyst Lilia Shevtsova as "political schizophrenia" or the Kremlin's Triad: "To be with the West; to be inside the West; and to be against the West." In this way, Moscow is pursuing "an exemplary post-postmodern policy comprised of incompatible elements and blurred lines between principles and norms, war and peace, right and wrong, reality and imitation, ally and enemy, law and lawlessness, and internal and external conflict."[139] The Russian political regime is fighting for its survival, using a hybrid war saturated in deceptions, but has little to offer, except Global Order *a la Russe.*

To counter Russian ideological influence, experts suggest that Ukraine has to put its narrative in a broader international context that highlights its central role in European history, from the days of Kyivan Rus to the Ukrainian experience at the epicenter of twentieth-century totalitarianism. This approach will debunk the Russian myth about the "all-Union" famine, as well as other myths that emanated from the Soviet era (i.e., Ukraine and Russia being "brotherly nations"). As long as the plunder of Ukraine and the mass killing of Ukraine's citizens by starvation in 1932–1933 go unrecognized by Russia and the international community at large, the risk of further violence remains. To stop the war against Ukraine, Russia

136 Robert Conquest, *Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 231.

137 Bertelsen, "A Trial *in Absentia*," 64.

138 See Douglas E. Schoen and Evan Roth Smith, *Putin's Master Plan to Destroy Europe, Divide NATO, and Restore Russian Power and Global Influence* (New York: Encounter Books, 2016).

139 Lilia Shevtsova, "The Kremlin's Triad as the Means of Survival," *The American Interest*, 19 April 2016, https://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/04/19/the-kremlins-triad-as-the-means-of-survival/ (accessed 24 May 2020).

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and partners in the Normandy Four[140] must live up to their global responsibility and restore justice, letting the Ukrainian people fulfill their historic mission without coercion from Russia, a member of the U.N. Security Council. In order to secure its future, Ukraine must first win the fight for its past.

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140 The Normandy Four is a consultative body of the foreign affairs ministers of Ukraine, Germany, France, and Russia. In October 2019, the Bundestag refused to recognize the Holodomor as genocide, leaving many convinced that economic profits from the German-Russian joint venture of Nord Stream 2 pipeline traversing the Baltic Sea had taken precedence over the human rights and historical justice.

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Russian Influence on Italian Culture, Academia, and Think Tanks

Massimiliano Di Pasquale and Luigi Sergio Germani

This chapter discusses Russian influence on Italian culture, academia, and expert community, highlighting some of the connections of Italian universities and think tanks with Russian governmental and non-governmental soft power organizations. This study distinguishes between two different types of pro-Russian intellectuals and foreign policy experts in Italy: the neo-Eurasianists and the *Russlandversteher*.[1]

The Italian neo-Eurasianists hold radical pro-Moscow and anti-Western views. They are often admirers of Aleksandr Dugin, a Russian political analyst with close ties to the Kremlin who is known for his chauvinist and fascist views. They perceive Putin's Russia as a social and political model as well as a potential ally against EU and "globalist" élites who have allegedly impoverished Italy and robbed it of its sovereignty. Neo-Eurasianists express radical anti-NATO and anti-EU views and call for a strategic alliance between Europe and Russia.

The Italian *Russlandversteher*, on the other hand, have a moderate and pragmatic pro-Russian position often based on considerations of *realpolitik*. They tend to perceive that: a) Russia is an opportunity rather than a threat; b) the West is largely to blame for the Ukrainian revolutions and for the current crisis in Russia-West relations; and c) even if Italy is a member of NATO and the EU, it needs to have a "special relationship" with Russia in order to guarantee Italy's national and energy/economic security.

1 The term "*Russlandversteher*," which means literally "Russia understander," or more colloquially, "sympathizer," is used in the German public debate to indicate "pro-Kremlin" experts and politicians. See, for example, James Kirchick, "Vladimir Putin's Battle of Berlin," *Politico*, 3 October 2017, https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-vladmir-putin-battle-of-berlin-fake-news-propaganda-cold-war/ (accessed 30 May 2020).

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Although the differences between the neo-Eurasianist vision and that of the *Russlandversteher* are substantial, both are susceptible to the influence of Russian strategic narratives. This chapter offers a historical perspective on Russian-Italian relations from the early years of the nineteenth century through the two world wars to the present, focusing on the evolution of internal policies and worldviews in Italy from *rossobrunismo*[2] to neo-Eurasianism ideology to a more moderate and pragmatic *realpolitik* in response to persistent Russian "active measures" designed to undermine Italy's Atlanticist and Europeanist orientation, and its democratic values.

Rome and Moscow: An Old Friendship

In order to understand Russia's current influence on Italian politics, culture, and intellectual life, it is necessary to look at Russian-Italian relations in historical perspective, and in particular to highlight Moscow's "special relationship" with Rome, which dates back to the early years of the last century.[3] The Agreement at Racconigi, known as the Racconigi Bargain, signed on 24 October 1909 by King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy and Nicholas II of the Russian Empire, established cooperation between Italy and Tsarist Russia to prevent a single power from dominating Europe. During the Second World War, Benito Mussolini and Iosif Stalin negotiated mutual recognition of spheres of influence in the Mediterranean (Rome) and Central/Eastern Europe (Moscow). During this period, Fascist Italy and the Soviet Union nearly signed a comprehensive alliance to counterbalance German supremacy in Europe.[4]

2 The Italian version of red-brownism ("rossobrunismo") is a mix of radical right-wing and radical left-wing ideologies, adopting the following ideas: nationalism, struggle against globalization and capitalism, hatred toward liberal democracy, hostility toward the EU, anti-Americanism, sympathy for Russia, condemnation of liberal attitudes on issues such as immigration, feminism, gender theories, and LGBT struggles.

3 Angelantonio Rosato, "A Marriage of Convenience? The Future of Italy-Russia Relations," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 15 July 2016, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_a_marriage_of_convenience_the_future_of_italy_russia_relations (accessed 30 May 2020).

4 Rosato, "A Marriage of Convenience?"

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In the early 1930s, the Italian government tended to neglect reports about the Holodomor, the artificial famine inflicted on Ukraine in 1932–1933 by the Stalin regime with genocidal intent. Although Mussolini personally read and marked up some of the reports from Ukraine, he never criticized the Soviet regime and Stalin's genocides in the USSR, being more interested in trade relations with Moscow.[5] The USSR and Italy continued to have good economic and political relations after the Second World War, despite the fact that the two countries belonged to opposing Cold War military blocs.

Despite joining NATO in April 1949, the Council of Europe in May 1949, and the European Coal and Steel Community in April 1951, Italy was home to the largest Communist Party in Western Europe. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) played a pivotal role in the anti-fascist and anti-Nazi resistance movement during the Second World War and was the second largest political party in Italy in the post-war period.

As has been pointed out by Elena Aga-Rossi and Viktor Zaslavsky, the PCI succeeded in spreading the belief in the imminent collapse of capitalism, and linking this belief to the myth of the Soviet proletarian state by leveraging anti-capitalist and anti-American feelings that were widespread in Italy's fascist, Catholic, socialist and communist circles.[6] With the passing of time, the idealization of the USSR decreased and the PCI distanced itself from the Soviet regime, yet the denigration of the United States remained an important characteristic of the PCI's political and cultural discourse.

5 For a discussion about how the information about the Holodomor was concealed and obscured by the Soviets, and has been distorted by the political leadership in the Russian Federation, see Victoria A. Malko's essay in this volume; see also Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (New York: Doubleday, 2017).

6 See Elena Aga-Rossi and Victor Zaslavsky, *Togliatti e Stalin. Il PCI e la politica estera staliniana negli archivi di Mosca* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997).

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Forty-Five Years of the PCI's "Cultural Hegemony," 1944–1989

After the end of the Second World War, the PCI decided to shelve the goal of violent communist revolution and instead pursued a strategy aimed at achieving "cultural hegemony" in Italian society, based on the thinking of Italian Marxist political theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). Gramsci considered the violent Bolshevik-style revolution and the take-over of state power by a revolutionary party unworkable in the more economically and culturally advanced societies of Western Europe. He recommended adopting a non-violent and gradual long-term strategy aimed at achieving "cultural hegemony" by steadily expanding the PCI's influence in culture and civil society, as well as undermining the authority and legitimacy of the ruling political establishment through cultural and ideological "struggle." As non-violent means, "cultural hegemony" and domination were seen as a necessary step toward the PCI seizing political power.[7]

In pursuit of the Gramscian strategy, the PCI sought to penetrate society's cultural institutions and gradually achieve control over schools, universities, the press, television, publishing, entertainment, churches, trade unions, civic associations, and social movements. The PCI, that until the late 1970s was secretly financed by the Soviet Union through KGB channels, to a significant degree succeeded in achieving its goal of winning people's hearts and minds through cultural appeal.

The Einaudi publishing house, one of the most prestigious in Italy, serves as an example of the PCI's influences. The house was established by Giulio Einaudi, son of the liberal economist and later Italian president Luigi Einaudi, who became close to the PCI in 1953. Encouraged by the PCI, the Einaudi house published several volumes written by Stalin. The PCI also established close relationships with other important publishing houses, such as Editori Riuniti, extending its influence on their internal policies and procedures.

7 See Antonio Gramsci, *Note sul Machiavelli, sulla politica e sullo Stato moderno* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1996).

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The PCI's strong influences on Italian culture and the power that the party exercised over artistic institutions, cinema, universities, and the distribution of literary prizes did not weaken after the tragic events in Budapest (1956) and Prague (1968). Even after the PCI distanced itself from the Soviet Union in the 1970s and early 1980s, the Kremlin continued to use the PCI as its tool to conduct influence operations in Italy. At the same time, the KGB and other Soviet Bloc intelligence services conducted active measures[8] in Italy, using agents of influence who had been recruited among Italian politicians of different ideological persuasions, journalists, and intellectuals.[9]

Luciano Cafagna, a renowned Italian historian, has highlighted Italy's "Communist paradox": it is a remarkable fact that the PCI succeeded in exercising "cultural hegemony" in Italian society, even when the party itself became "empty inside."[10] Anti-Americanism continued to define communist identity and to permeate large sectors of Italian culture until the very collapse of the USSR. Anti-American propaganda spread by the PCI shaped anti-Western attitudes and worldviews, and retained a strong foothold in Italian society after 1991, in particular among intellectuals.[11]

The Rise of Neo-Eurasianism in Italy, 1991–2004

In 1990, when the Soviet system began to crumble and the fall of communism in Eastern Europe seemed inevitable, the PCI changed its name to the "Democratic Party of the Left," shelved its communist ideology, and severed its links to the USSR. During the

8 In the Soviet intelligence terminology, the term "active measures" encompassed a broad range of overt and covert influence operations conducted in support of Soviet foreign policy. Active measures were distinct from intelligence and counterintelligence activities, as well as from conventional diplomacy. See United States Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986–87*, *Department of State Publications*, August 1987, https://jmw.typepad.com/files/state-department---a-report-on-active-measures-and-propaganda.pdf (accessed 30 May 2020), p. viii.

9 See Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1999), chapter 27.

10 See Nello Ajello, *Il Lungo Addio. Intellettuali e PCI dal 1958 al 1991* (Bari: Laterza, 1997).

11 See Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky, *Togliatti e Stalin.*

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1990s, Russian influence activities in Italy appeared to have diminished substantially. Russia's active measures apparatus targeting the West became less effective and lacked sufficient support and guidance from the new regime led by Boris Yeltsin. Russia's foreign intelligence services—the SVR and GRU—continued to operate in the West, including Italy, but their activities were limited to the areas of political, military and technological espionage.[12] The field of active measures was nearly vacant.

Interest in post-Soviet Russia among Italian intellectuals and foreign policy experts generally declined in the 1990s. In contrast, interest in Russia among extreme right-wing intellectuals in Italy and other European countries grew substantially, because they believed that the fall of communism might encourage Russian ultranationalists to spearhead a revolution in Moscow informed by the "red-brown" ideology (a synthesis of communist and fascist ideas) and neo-Eurasianism,[13] which would make it possible to create a great Eurasian bloc, from Dublin to Vladivostok, liberated from U.S. influences.[14]

As a result, a number of Italian right-wing extremist intellectuals, as well as their colleagues from France, Belgium, and other European countries, began to cooperate intensively with Russian ultranationalist intellectuals and politicians such as Aleksandr Dugin, Aleksandr Prokhanov, Sergei Baburin, Sergei Glaziev, and Vladimir Zhirinovsky, most of whom belonged to the anti-Yeltsin "patriotic opposition." Anti-modern traditionalism, anti-globalism,

12 The SVR refers to the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation and is subordinate to the president of the Russian Federation. It succeeded the First Chief Directorate of the KGB in December 1991. The GRU, an acronym for the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, formerly the Main Intelligence Directorate, is subordinate to the Russian military command.

13 For an overview of neo-Eurasian ideology and its influence on the Soviet and post-Soviet élite, see Victor Yasmann, "Red Religion: An Ideology of Neo-Messianic Russian Fundamentalism," *Demokratizatsiya* 1, no. 2 (1993): 20–38.

14 Anton Shekhovtsov, *Russia and the Western Far Right: Tango Noir* (London & New York: Routledge, 2018), 48; Claudio Gatti, *I demoni di Salvini. I post-nazisti e la Lega* (Milano: Chiarelettere Editore, 2019), 87–100.

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and anti-Americanism were the main characteristics of the emerging neo-Eurasian ideology, shared by the European extreme right and Russian ultranationalists.[15]

In Italy during the 1990s, some members of radical right groups believed that they could exploit the ideological vacuum created by the collapse of communism to expand the influence of neo-Eurasianist and red-brown ideas.[16] Yet in the 1990s, they were unable to achieve this goal. Only a few decades later, these ideas began to penetrate the mainstream sectors of Italian culture and politics.

Claudio Mutti was one of the key Italian radical right intellectuals who in the 1990s was involved in promoting neo-Eurasianism in Italy and building bridges with Russian ultranationalists, especially with Aleksandr Dugin. Mutti, an expert on Finno-Ugric languages and scholar of geopolitics, was a former activist in the Italian branch of the extreme right-wing organization Young Europe, a name taken from the title of *La Jeune Europe*, a journal published in Nazi Germany in 1942–1945.[17] In 1978 Mutti founded his publishing house, Edizioni all'Insegna del Veltro, that for a number of years focused exclusively on topics and authors popular among radical right-wing audiences. He published books about Corneliu Codreanu (a Romanian politician who founded the local Legionnaire fascist movement), Julius Evola (an Italian philosopher, "fascist intellectual," and self-described "superfascist"), and Pierre Drieu La Rochelle (a French writer and a proponent of French fascism in the 1930s), and works by Adolf Hitler.[18] In the early 1990s, influenced by Russian and European red-brown thinking, Mutti also began to publish works that appealed to extreme leftist readers.[19]

15 Shekhovtsov, *Russia and the Western Far Right*.

16 Steven Forti, "Un fantasma si aggira per l'Italia: il rossobrunismo," *Rolling Stone*, 28 September 2018, https://www.rollingstone.it/politica/un-fantasma-si-aggira-per-litalia-il-rossobrunismo/429133/#Galassia (accessed 30 May 2020).

17 Shekhovtsov, *Russia and the Western Far Right*, 28.

18 Giovanni Savino, "From Evola to Dugin: The Neo-Eurasian Connection in Italy," in *Eurasianism and the European Far Right: Reshaping the Europe-Russia Relationship*, ed. Marlene Laruelle (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 106.

19 Savino, 108.

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The beginning of Mutti's intellectual partnership with Aleksandr Dugin appears to date back to the mid-1980s. In 1991, Mutti's publishing house released *Continente Russia*, a collection of Dugin's essays translated into Italian. According to Giovanni Savino, the publication of *Continente Russia* marked the beginning of a new era—the emergence of the Italian radical right that included former activists of the neo-fascist/post-fascist party (MSI, Movimento Sociale Italiano)[20] who looked to Russia for ideological inspiration: "Many hopes were pinned on a red-brown revolution, or a triumph of tradition, in Moscow, and Dugin was seen as the Messiah for the tiny group around Mutti and Carlo Terracciano, one of the former leaders of the Fronte della Gioventù (Youth Front), the youth organization of the MSI."[21]

Another key figure in the radical right who shifted to neo-Eurasianism was Maurizio Murelli, a former MSI activist who was convicted for his involvement in violent clashes with the police. In 1984 he established a journal entitled *Orion* that placed Mutti and Terracciano on its editorial board. Like Mutti and Terraciano, Murelli began to view Russian ultranationalist and red-brown movements emerged after 1991 as the potential leading forces of a new European front, uniting radical right and radical left movements that opposed U.S. global hegemony.[22] However, the attempt to enroll radical leftists in a red-brown political project against U.S. imperialism did not succeed in the mid-1990s.

In a few years, Mutti and Terracciano spotted another opportunity for pursuing their goal to broaden the influence of neo-Eurasianism and red-brownism in Italy, especially among the radical leftists. This happened in 1999, when a wave of social protests, linked to the anti-globalization movement, swept Italy, reaching its peak between 2001 and 2004.[23] After the 2003 U.S. intervention in

20 Savino, 107. The Italian Social Movement (Movimento Sociale Italiano, MSI), a neo-fascist/post-fascist political party formed by a group of fascist veterans on 26 December 1946 in Rome, was renamed the Italian Social Movement—National Right (Movimento Sociale Italiano—Destra Nazionale, MSI–DN) in 1972.

21 Savino, 106.

22 Savino, 108.

23 Savino, 109. Violently repressed by the police, the mass demonstrations in Naples in March 2001 and the "No G-8" protests, during the Group of Eight meeting in

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Iraq, Mutti, Terracciano, and Tiberio Graziani, a geopolitical theorist who was also connected to the radical right, "helped promote an anti-U.S. campaign during the Iraq War, with a small segment of far-left organizations grouped around Campo Antimperialista, a broad anti-American initiative."[24]

A year later, in the fall of 2004, seeking to widen the influence of neo-Eurasianism on the Italian cultural and academic landscape, Mutti and Graziani founded the geopolitical studies journal entitled *Eurasia. Rivista di studi geopolitici.* The opening articles of *Eurasia*'s first issue included an Italian translation of Dugin's "The Eurasianist Idea" and an essay written by the Russian Eurasianist Nikolai Trubetskoi.

Furthermore, according to Claudio Gatti, in the late 1990s, several pro-Russian radical right-wing intellectuals tried to penetrate the Lega Nord and convince its leadership to adopt pro-Russian and neo-Eurasianist ideas.[25] In the spring of 1999, when the Kosovo crisis broke out, Umberto Bossi, the then leader of the Lega Nord, decided to side with Slobodan Milošević's Serbs and their Russian Orthodox allies in the Kremlin. This shift to a pro-Serbian position appeared incomprehensible because the Lega was then a regionalist and separatist movement. Bossi justified it as a necessary change, given the fact that "the Kosovars were an instrument of the Atlantic Alliance."[26]

Gianluca Savoini, a journalist, political operative, and key advisor to the Lega who in the early 2000s tried to persuade the party to adopt a pro-Russian position and embrace neo-Eurasianism, had close connections with the aforementioned radical right journal *Orion*, actively promoting Aleksandr Dugin's thinking in Italy. The efforts of Savoini and other radical right intellectuals to move the

Genoa on 19–22 July 2001, marked the peak of the anti-globalization movement in Italy.

24 Savino, 108.

25 Claudio Gatti is an Italian journalist who has investigated the links between the Italian extreme right and the Lega Nord now led by Matteo Salvini (the Northern League, one of the two populist parties that led the government until September 2019).

26 Gatti, *I demoni di Salvini*, 152.

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Lega toward neo-Eurasianism were unsuccessful at the time, because in 2001 Bossi decided that the Lega would return to the government as a coalition partner with Forza Italia, the mainstream center-right party led by Silvio Berlusconi. The goal, pursued by Savoini and others, of making the Lega a strongly pro-Russian party embracing elements of neo-Eurasianism, was finally achieved in 2013. That year Salvini and his team decided to embark upon a major rebranding of the party, transforming the Lega from a Northern-Italy focused separatist party into a far-right nationalist-populist force, similar to Marine Le Pen's Front National, with a strong and visible pro-Russian and pro-Putin orientation.[27]

The Lega's shift to a pro-Russian orientation became transparent on 15 December 2013 in Turin, when Salvini was elected the Lega's leader by the party congress. Among foreign guests attending the Lega's congress were Viktor Zubarev, United Russia deputy, and Alexei Komov, a close aide of the Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeev (who is close to the Russian Orthodox Church). At that time and in the following years, Savoini, president of the pro-Kremlin "Lombardy-Russia Cultural Association," acted as Salvini's advisor, and has played a crucial role in the development of the Lega's contacts in Russia.[28]

From the Color Revolutions to the Ukrainian Crisis: The Increasing Influence of the Italian *Russlandversteher*, 2004–2014

The Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003) and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004) provoked considerable concerns among the Russia's political and security élites who feared that the United States and other Western governments engaged in information warfare activities aimed to undermine Russia's influence in its "near

27 Luigi Sergio Germani and Jacopo Iacoboni, "Italy: Can the Slide Towards Russia be Reversed?," in *The Kremlin's Trojan Horses 2.0*, ed. Alina Polyakova (Washington D.C.: The Atlantic Council, November 2017), 12; also available at *Atlantic Council*, 15 November 2017, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/the-kremlin-s-trojan-horses-2-0 (accessed 30 May 2020).

28 Germani and Iacoboni, "Italy: Can the Slide Towards Russia be Reversed?," 14.

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abroad" by fomenting "color revolutions," and to weaken and eventually overthrow Putin's regime. This threat perception incited the Kremlin to adopt defensive countermeasures to protect Russian society against Western influence and to advance Russia's offensive information warfare capabilities targeting post-Soviet and Western states.[29] Beginning from 2003–2004, President Vladimir Putin expanded and modernized Russia's active measures apparatus, enhancing the covert influence capabilities of the SVR and GRU (Russian abbreviations for the Russian secret services) and creating new Kremlin-controlled overt government and non-government soft power organizations. Their key objectives were to shape public opinion domestically and abroad and to influence the perceptions of broader foreign audiences.[30] In particular,

- In 2004, the Kremlin created the Valdai Discussion Club to woo international experts;
- In 2005, the 24-hour news channel Russia Today (subsequently renamed RT) was established;
- on Putin's initiative and under the auspices of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Russia's Ministry of Education and Science, in 2007, the Russkii Mir Foundation was founded;
- In 2008, in accordance with Presidential Decree no. 1315, the Roszarubezhtsentr was renamed Rossotrudnichestvo (the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and Inter-

29 Stefan Meister, "Isolation and Propaganda: The Roots and Instruments of Russia's Disinformation Campaign," *The German Marshall Fund of the United States*, 15 April 2016, https://www.gmfus.org/publications/isolation-and-propaganda-roots-and-instruments-russia%E2%80%99s-disinformation-campaign (accessed 30 May 2020), pp. 3–5.

30 Kateryna Smagliy, "Hybrid Analytica: Pro-Kremlin Expert Propaganda in Moscow, Europe and the U.S. A Case Study on Think Tanks and Universities," *The Institute of Modern Russia/Underminers*, October 2018, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f8f41ef14aa13b95239af0/t/5c6d8b38b208fc7087fd2b2a/1550682943143/Smagliy_Hybrid-Analytica_10-2018_upd.pdf (accessed 30 May 2020).

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national Humanitarian Cooperation) and was given significantly greater additional funding to expand its activities, particularly in the West;
- In 2010, the then President Dmitrii Medvedev established the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund, a think tank with close ties with Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- In 2010, the "Creative Diplomacy" initiative (PICREADI) was founded, a Moscow-based non-governmental organization, functioning in the realms of public diplomacy and foreign affairs.

Kremlin-supported think tanks were also created both in Russia and abroad as a key component of Russia's refurbished active measures apparatus. For example, in 2008 the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation (IDC) was established in Paris and New York. In 2010 the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) was founded by Medvedev's Presidential Decree. In 2011 Medvedev changed the status of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS), transferring it to the Presidential Administration's jurisdiction. Previously, the RISS was under the SVR's auspices (the Russian foreign intelligence service).[31]

Between 2004 and 2014, a cataclysmic period of color revolutions in several post-Soviet states, the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, and the 2014 Russian-Ukrainian war, Russian influence activities in Italy steadily increased. Russian active measures in Italy sought to promote both neo-Eurasianist and *Russlandversteher* narratives. Neo-Eurasianists tried to increase their influence, yet it was the Italian *Russlandversteher* of more moderate pro-Russian orientation that dominated Italy's media and academic discourse about Russian and post-Soviet affairs, and other critical foreign policy issues.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Italian scholars, journalists, and policy-makers struggled to come to terms with the idea

31 For further information on these and other Kremlin-sponsored think tanks, see Smagliy, "Hybrid Analytica;" and Carolina Vendil Pallin and Susanne Oxenstierna, "Russian Think Tanks and Soft Power" (report no. FOI-R-4451-SE)," *Swedish Defense Research Agency*, 12 September 2017, https://www.foi.se/report-summary?reportNo=FOI-R--4451--SE (accessed 30 May 2020).

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of newly independent states once governed by Moscow. Despite the fact that the USSR was a federal union of 15 constituent republics in Eastern Europe and in Western and Northern Asia, Italian intellectuals often identified the Soviet Union with Russia. Italian politicians and journalists frequently used the Soviet Union and Russia as synonyms, generating misunderstanding and confusion among the general public.[32]

Until the Orange Revolution of 2004, there was almost no information and analysis of Ukrainian affairs in Italian newspapers, magazines, and TV news. The only exception to this general trend was the influential geopolitical magazine *Limes,* which from the early 1990s began publishing articles about Ukraine, largely portraying it as Russia's appendix that sooner or later would have to join or be forced to join the Russian Federation or, in the worst-case scenario, would split into two halves.

In November 2004, when the protests in Kyiv known as the Orange Revolution expanded and spread to eastern and western Ukraine, many Italians heard of a country called "Ukraine" for the first time. Italian newspapers, radio channels, and TV news reported the events in Ukraine, but the reporting was done by their Moscow correspondents whose lack of knowledge about Ukrainian history and politics often led to a biased coverage of events. For example, on 28 November 2004, in an article entitled "Putin's thorn," the former Italian Ambassador in Moscow and historian Sergio Romano, who holds clear *Russlandversteher* views, claimed that the EU should reassure Putin that Ukraine "would never be a Polish thorn in the flesh of the Russian state."[33] Apparently, in Romano's view, Russian geopolitical interests, as defined by the Kremlin, should not be undermined by pro-democratic movements in Ukraine.

32 See Massimiliano Di Pasquale, "Euromaidan and the Donbas war in the Italian media," *Euromaidan Press*, 16 July 2016, http://euromaidanpress.com/2016/07/16/euromaidan-and-the-donbas-war-in-the-italian-media/ (accessed 30 May 2020).

33 Sergio Romano, "La spina di Putin," *Corriere della Sera,* 28 November 2004, http://www.archiviostampa.it/it/articoli/art.aspx?id=4966 (accessed 30 May 2020).

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In August 2008, a few months before the onset of the conflict between Georgia and Russia, which might be viewed as the Kremlin's first trial of hybrid warfare, the aforementioned geopolitical journal *Limes* increased its publication of articles that reflected *Russlandvesteher* views. *Limes*'s issue no. 3 of 2008 was entitled "The Russia Project," and one of its subtitles was "How to Dismember Ukraine and Georgia." This issue included maps of Ukraine broken up in different parts. Various articles in this issue appeared to question the legitimacy of Ukraine's borders which supported the Russian strategic narrative of Ukraine being "not even a state."[34]

A year later, in 2009, *Limes* published a volume entitled *Eurussia, Our Future*?[35] that, with the exception of a few balanced articles, seemed to support the *Russlandversteher* vision. The volume included articles by several Russian analysts and officials close to the Kremlin, such as Fiodor Lukianov, Aleksandr Medvedev, Aleksei Miller, Vitalii Tretiakov, and Mikhail Remizov.

The same year, Bocconi University Press (BUP) published the Italian version of Edward Lucas's book *The New Cold War*, an in-depth analysis of the nature of Putin's regime. This book, which predicted the war scenario in Ukraine, was accompanied by a foreword, written by the influential diplomat and historian Sergio Romano. He harshly criticized Lucas's thesis, identifying it as Russophobic.[36]

When in November 2013 the first wave of protests known as Euromaidan or the Revolution of Dignity began in Kyiv, in Italy "the template" for a *Russlandversteher* interpretation of these events had already been prepared. Trying to understand the unfolding crisis, many analysts and commentators at first adopted a pro-Russian stance, partly because they knew little about Ukrainian politics. But

34 Lucio Caracciolo, "Le sciabole dello zar," *Limes*, 22 May 2008, https://www.limesonline.com/rubrica/le-sciabole-dello-zar (accessed 30 May 2020).

35 "Eurussia il nostro futuro?," *Limes*, 28 April 2009, http://www.limesonline.com/sommari-rivista/eurussia-il-nostro-futuro (accessed 3 June 2020).

36 According to Romano, the book was a deliberate provocation to humiliate and weaken Russia. He praised the new course initiated by Putin, arguing that "Putin's men, because they had a KGB background, were intelligent and skilled, as well as particularly suited to the task of restoring the strength and unity of the state." See Sergio Romano, "Preface," in *La Nuova Guerra Fredda* by Edward Lucas (Milano: Bocconi University Press, 2009), xiv.

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as the situation in Kyiv worsened, full-fledged Kremlin narratives about the crisis became dominant among the experts, academics, and in the media. The most important mainstream newspapers, such as *Corriere della Sera* and *Repubblica*, did publish balanced articles, but even they included anti-Ukrainian reports and editorials that reinforced Russian propaganda messages. Interestingly, standing on opposite sides of the ideological spectrum, the center-right newspaper *Il Giornale*, owned by tycoon Berlusconi (Putin's close friend), and the far-left newspaper *Il Manifesto* identified the Ukrainian people protesting in Kyiv as right-wing extremists. The narrative adopted by these two newspapers completely ignored the fact that the majority of people, gathered at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square), were ordinary citizens who protested peacefully against government corruption, abuse of power, and violation of human rights. The protest got violent only after the authorities began to use force against the protesters. The only exception was Turin's *La Stampa* that offered a balanced interpretation and comprehensive analysis of the events in Ukraine.

Comments and analyses of the Ukrainian situation written by well-known Italian historians and political scientists were conceptually limited and factually inaccurate, frequently mirroring Russian strategic narratives. The political philosopher Massimo Cacciari, for example, claimed that the Russians would stop after they annexed Crimea, and that the concerns about Russia taking over the rest of Ukraine were unfounded.[37] The conflict unraveled in the Donbas proved Cacciari was wrong.

A week before the war in Donbas began, in his interview to the popular newspaper *Libero,* Franco Cardini, a medieval historian and a former militant in the extreme right-wing organization "Young Europe" connected to the aforementioned Claudio Mutti,[38]

37 Di Giovanni Tomasin, "Cacciari: 'Caso Ucraina, Bruxelles incauta Ma il Cremlino si fermerà'," *Il Piccolo*, 8 April 2014, https://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/cronaca/2014/04/08/news/oggi-e-piu-difficile-nutrire-speranze-sulla-casa-comune-1.9008215 (accessed 31 May 2020).

38 Cardini is on the Scientific Committee of Mutti's journal *Eurasia – Rivista di studi geopolitici*. The Italian Eurasianist organization "Stato e Potenza" reported Cardini's nomination as member of the Scientific Committee of Eurasia.

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described the Euromaidan as a Ukrainian-Polish coup d'état supported by the United States.[39] According to Cardini, the people at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti were Nazis.

Oksana Pakhlyovska, professor of Ukrainian Language and Literature at the University of Rome "La Sapienza," has reported that in 2014–2015, 35 books on Ukrainian affairs were published in Italy. In the vast majority of these works, the Kyiv government was depicted as a fascist junta and the Euromaidan as a coup d'état. Pakhlyovska has noted that these books had been written by lesser-known authors and marginal publishers, as well as by well-established academics.[40]

Italian Neo-Eurasianists Enter the Mainstream

In 2013–2014, and especially after Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, neo-Eurasianism with its more radical pro-Russian and anti-Western narratives which was previously influential only among the extreme right and extreme left, began to enter Italy's mainstream cultural, media and foreign policy debates. This move of neo-Eurasianist ideas from the fringes to the mainstream of Italian cultural and political discourse was the result of several political and ideological developments both in Russia and in Italy.

When Putin returned to presidency in May 2012, the perception of threat of popular revolt was acute and vivid among the Russian political élite. It was provoked by the 2011–2013 protests in Russia, initially organized by the leaders of the Russian opposition parties. To mitigate this threat and ensure the political system's stability and legitimacy, Putin initiated a series of important domestic

39 Giulio Bucchi, "Lo storico Franco Cardini: 'Usa, che flop in Ucraina. Hanno scatenato quattro nazistacci'," *Libero*, 31 March 2014, https://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/esteri/11583308/Lo-storico-Franco-Cardini--.html (accessed 5 June 2020).

40 Oksana Pakhlyovska (interview with Kateryna Zarembo), "V Italii praktychno nemaie lideriv hromadianskoi dumky, iaki b adekvatno rozpovidaly ukrainsku story," *Glavkom,* 1 December 2016, https://glavcom.ua/interviews/oksana-pahlovska-v-italiji-val-antiukrajinskoji-literaturi-jiji-leytmotiv-kijivskahunta-vchinila-genocid-385760.html (accessed 31 May 2020).

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and foreign policy changes that shifted the Russian regime's orientation toward a rigid form of nationalist authoritarianism at home and further developed an increasingly confrontational communication pattern and attitudes toward the West.[41] He also established a new regime ideology based on several key elements of neo-Eurasianism which, as explained earlier, had been advanced by Russian ultranationalist intellectuals in the early 1990s. The new ideology of Putin's regime has postulated a rivalry between two models of civilizations, Eurasian-Russian and liberal "Atlantic." The latter was led by the United States and perceived to be a power that aimed to weaken and disintegrate the Russian state. According to this ideology, Russia is a unique civilization with traditional values rooted in the Orthodox Church and its religious teachings, and it is superior to the "decadent" values of the godless post-modern West. Russia engages in a civilizational struggle against liberalism to defend its traditions, conservative values, and true liberty.[42] Importantly, the Russian Orthodox Church has been assigned a key role in bolstering Putin's regime and his new nationalist and neo-Eurasianist ideology, and in securing popular support for Putin's policies.[43]

This ideology prompted Russia to reconceptualize and advance its active measures in the West that have become increasingly aggressive after 2010. The Kremlin began to pursue more ambitious geopolitical goals, such as undermining and weakening NATO and the EU, fomenting tensions among Euro-Atlantic allies, encouraging domestic polarization and instability in European countries,

41 Leon Aron, "Putinology," *The American Interest* (vol. 11, no. 1), 30 July 2015, https://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/07/30/putinology/ (accessed 31 May 2020).

42 Jolanta Darczewska, "The Anatomy of Russian Information Warfare: The Crimean Operation, a Case Study," *Center for Eastern Studies (OSW)/Warsaw*, 22 May 2014, https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/point-view/2014-05-22/anatomy-russian-information-warfare-crimean-operation-a-case-study (accessed 31 May 2020), p. 7; John R. Schindler, "Russian Activities Across Europe: A Contrarian Assessment" (a report for the U.S. Department of Defense), *The XX Committee*, 7 May 2019, https://20committee.com/2019/05/07/russian-activities-across-europe-a-contrarian-assessment/ (accessed 31 May 2020).

43 Schindler, "Russian Activities Across Europe;" see also Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2018).

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and discrediting Western liberal democracy.[44] By 2012, Russia's shift to a more repressive nationalist authoritarian regime and its intensified ideological and political-military confrontation with the West became quite perceptible.

Like other European states, Italy became a target of Russia's active measures. In 2011, the economic crisis in Italy that provoked a sharp decline in the living standards and economic security across all social strata of Italian society, especially the middle class, made Italy vulnerable. The Five Star Movement (M5S) and Lega, the two leading populist-nationalist parties, exploited popular anger and resentment against the country's political élite and significantly increased their popularity and appeal among Italian voters.[45]

Putin's new regime appeared attractive to both far-left and far-right national populists in Italy. Europe's far-right populists (as well as conservative Catholics) were drawn by the Kremlin's new nationalist and neo-Eurasianist ideology that stressed social conservatism and protection of traditional and Christian values, political authoritarianism, defense of national sovereignty, and rejection of the West's post-modern value system. Europe's far-left populists supported the Kremlin's ideological hostility to globalization and to the U.S.-dominated international capitalist order.

The increasing popularity of Italy's populist-nationalist forces seemed beneficial to the Kremlin. Through active measures and support for populist-nationalist groups, Russia sought to expedite the expansion of "sovereigntist" (that is illiberal nationalist) and neo-Eurasianist ideas and increase their influence in Italy. The 2013–2014 Euromaidan Revolution in Ukraine and the European values it affirmed jeopardized the Russian geopolitical project in Europe. Russia embarked on several subversive operations in Europe, including Italy, to counterbalance Ukraine's success and to solidify pro-Kremlin, anti-Western, and anti-EU ideas in Europe.

44 Donald N. Jensen and Peter B. Doran, "Chaos as a Strategy: Putin's Promethean Gamble," *Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA)*, 15 November 2018, https://www.cepa.org/chaos-as-a-strategy (accessed 31 May 2020).

45 See Germani and Iacoboni, "Italy."

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The following paragraphs offer several examples of Russia's penetration of Italian cultural institutions and its influence on Italian culture.

Rizzoli, Feltrinelli, Einaudi, and Bompiani, four largest Italian publishers, have published several books authored by Diego Fusaro, a young philosopher and Dugin's admirer. Fusaro identifies himself as a follower of Marx and Gramsci, and holds radical anti-Western and pro-Kremlin views, routinely praising Putin's domestic and foreign policies in various media outlets, such as the online newspaper *Affari Italiani*[46] and *Il Primato Nazionale*.[47]

Another intellectual who is extremely active in spreading radical pro-Russian messages through mainstream publishing houses is Giulietto Chiesa, a journalist, an expert on Soviet affairs during the Gorbachev era, a member of the European Parliament, and a self-declared communist. Like Fusaro, Chiesa is Dugin's devotee. In addition, he is an anti-Western conspiracy theorist,[48] famous for anti-Western publications. His most recent book, *Putinfobia* (2017) with Piemme (a publisher that belongs to the prestigious Mondadori group), includes an introduction by Nicolai Lilin, an Italy-based writer from Transdniester that holds neo-Eurasianist views.[49] In his book, Chiesa defends Putin's foreign policies and claims that the West, which is allegedly experiencing the beginning of a profound crisis which might lead to its collapse, aims to disintegrate Russia. Both Chiesa and Lilin are among the authors of a collected

46 See Fusaro's blog in *Affari Italiani*, http://www.affaritaliani.it/blog/lampi-del-pensiero/ (accessed 31 May 2020); and in *La Ragion Populista,* https://www.ilprimatonazionale.it/la-ragion-populista/ (accessed 31 May 2020).

47 "CasaPound, Di Stefano: 'Siamo fascisti, ma ci piace anche Putin'," *LaPresse*, 16 November 2017, https://www.lapresse.it/politica/casapound_di_stefano_siamo_fascisti_ma_ci_piace_anche_putin_-133489/news/2017-11-16/ (accessed 31 May 2020). *Il Primato Nazionale* is the official magazine of the extreme right-wing movement CasaPound.

48 Davide Piacenza, "Il complotto contro Giulietto," *Rivista Studio*, 31 March 2016, https://www.rivistastudio.com/il-complotto-contro-giulietto/ (accessed 31 May 2020).

49 Antonio Armano, "Lilin, la bufala che venne dal freddo," *Il Fatto Quotidiano,* 12 May 2011, https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2011/05/12/lilin-la-bufala-che-venne-dal-freddo-2/109502/ (accessed 31 May 2020). Lilin became popular in Italy after he published a controversial novel *Educazione Siberiana.*

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volume entitled *Attacco all'Ucraina* (Attack against Ukraine), published in 2015 by Sandro Teti Editore. The book's several contributors repeat Russian propaganda themes, focusing on the events at the Maidan (Kyiv, Ukraine) and the Donbas conflict.[50]

Since the onset of the Ukrainian crisis, more marginal Italian publishing houses, especially radical right and/or radical left-wing oriented, have noticeably increased the publication of books that promote Russian narratives. The Zambon publishing house serves as an example of these practices. This publishing house was established by Giuseppe Zambon, a former militant of the 1970s extreme left-wing movement Autonomia Operaia, led by the Marxist political philosopher Toni Negri.[51] One of Zambon's most prolific authors is Paolo Borgognone, author of seven books, including *Capire la Russia*.[52] Evidently sympathetic to neo-Eurasianist views, Borgognone describes himself as a "Black Bolshevik."[53]

50 Sandro Teti and Maurizio Carta, eds., *Attacco all'Ucraina* (Rome: Sandro Teti Editore, 2015). Other authors are Lucio Caracciolo, director of the aforementioned journal *Limes*; Carlo Freccero, author of TV programs; Aldo Ferrari, professor of history of the Caucasus at the University of Venice "Ca' Foscari"; Franco Cardini, historian; Fausto Biloslavo, war reporter; Paolo Calzini, professor of European Development at the John Hopkins University Bologna Center; Stefano Bruno Galli, professor of history and political doctrines at the University of Milan; Maurizio Carta, journalist.

51 See a report of the Parliamentary Inquiry on Terrorism in Italy: "Commissione Parlamentare d'Inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi," *Senato.it*, 22 March 2001, https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/DF/142144.pdf (accessed 31 May 2020).

52 Paolo Borgognone, *Capire la Russia: Correnti politiche e dinamiche sociali nella Russia e nell'Ucraina postsovietiche* (Milano: Zambon Editore, 2015).

53 In an interview, Borgognone has stated: "my historical-philosophical education was very much influenced by the works of thinkers who were heterogeneous from the ideological point of view, such as Konstantin Leontiev, Nikolai Danilevskii, Dragoš Kalajić, Aleksandr Zinoviev, Aleksandr Dugin, Gennadii Ziuganov, Igor Shafarevich, Alain de Benoist, Costanzo Preve, Carlo Terracciano, Claudio Mutti, and Adriano Romualdi." See Paolo Borgognone, "La Russia come modello," *Controinformazione*, 13 June 2018, https://www.controinformazione.info/la-russia-come-modello-intervista-a-paolo-borgognone/ (accessed 1 June 2020).

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Orazio Maria Gnerre, head of Millenium, an Italian branch of the European Communitarian Party,[54] and Sebastiano Caputo, director of the online journal *L'Intellettuale Dissidente*[55] and head of a publishing house, are two other young Italian intellectuals who hold radical anti-Western and pro-Russian views. Gnerre advocates "communitarianism," a political philosophy that, in his view, is an alternative to the dominant ideology of liberalism, which "dissolves ethnic, religious, and local community bonds" and leads to the "dehumanization of the world."[56] Both Gnerre and Caputo see themselves as waging a cultural war against "globalism," "globalist élites," and Western liberal democracy. Caputo, who is a scholar of Arabic specializing in Middle Eastern affairs, has stated that the goal of his team is to become the "intellectual vanguard" of a new political movement, and to strive for "cultural hegemony."[57]

In early 2019 it was announced that Caputo would direct a new television program on Italian state television (RAI) devoted to "alternative news outlets" and entitled "The 8th Blog." This announcement aroused consternation among many observers, especially in Italy's Jewish community because of Caputo's pro-Iranian, pro-Hezbollah, and radical anti-Israeli positions. It was also pointed out that Caputo had authored an article on his website which mocked the Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust.[58] In the

54 According to the investigative journal *BuzzFeed News*, Gnerre is connected to the aforementioned Gianluca Savoini and Italian mercenaries fighting in the Donbas alongside Russian proxies and pro-Russian separatists. See Alberto Nardelli and Olga Tokariuk, "Here's a Totally Incredible Story about Pro-Russian Mercenaries and a Close Aide To Italy's De Facto Leader," *BuzzFeed News*, 13 September 2018 (updated 16 September 2018), https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/albertonardelli/matteo-salvini-russia-gianluca-savoini (accessed 1 June 2020).

55 See the journal's website: https://www.lintellettualedissidente.it/.

56 Orazio Maria Gnerre, "L'intervista a Vice: una cosa divertente che non farò mai più," *Nova Europa*, 15 June 2017, http://www.novaeuropa.it/lintervista-a-vice-una-cosa-divertente-che-non-faro-mai-piu/ (accessed 1 June 2020).

57 Mattia Salvia, "Populismo, sovranità e meme su Putin: nella testa dei rossobruni italiani," *Vice*, 15 June 2017, https://www.vice.com/it/article/mbjp93/populismo-sovranita-e-meme-su-putin-nella-testa-dei-rossobruni-italiani (accessed 1 June 2020).

58 The article was published on *L'intellettuale dissidente* on 27 January 2013, but was subsequently deleted.

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end, Caputo's TV program did not go on the air despite the fact that Marcello Foa (President of RAI—Italian State Television) and Carlo Freccero (then Director of the RAI-2 Television channel) had supported the program.

Radical pro-Russian narratives have made increasing inroads in the Italian Catholic world. Maurizio Blondet is one example of an influential far-right Catholic commentator who has embraced Kremlin propaganda narratives, including anti-Western and anti-American conspiracy theories. Blondet, a regular contributor to *Sputnik Italia*,[59] is a former journalist of *Avvenire*, a popular Catholic newspaper, and his books have been published by Effedieffe Edizioni, a Catholic traditionalist publishing house. According to journalist Stefano Magni who has studied the relationship between Italian Catholic circles and the Kremlin, the view that Vladimir Putin is the main promoter of the rebirth of Christian values has become widespread among Italian Catholics:

> Yet it is in popular Catholic culture that Putinism is conquering [people's] hearts and minds. To share a personal anecdote, I experienced this during an evening broadcast on Radio Maria, one of the most influential and popular Catholic radio stations. I took part in a debate about the 2014 war in eastern Ukraine. As soon as the audience could participate, everybody—every one, without exception—expressed anger against the United States and the "Ukraine coup," while defending the Kremlin. One of the callers, who defined himself as a practicing Catholic and who completely dismissed the "mainstream media," said, "I trust only Pandora TV"—the web-based TV outlet founded by Giulietto Chiesa, a former Moscow correspondent for the Communist newspaper L'Unità.[60]

Magni also points out that Fulvio Scaglione, formerly deputy editor of *Famiglia Cristiana*, the most popular and authoritative Catholic weekly in Italy, has been particularly active in relaying strongly pro-Kremlin narratives about Ukraine and Syria crises.[61]

59 For Blondet's articles on *Sputnik Italia*, see https://it.sputniknews.com/search/?query=blondet; see also Blondet's blog: https://www.maurizioblondet.it/.

60 Stefano Magni, "Italian Catholics Increasingly Embrace Vladimir Putin," *Acton Institute Transatlantic Blog*, 16 July 2018, https://acton.org/publications/transatlantic/2018/07/16/italian-catholics-increasingly-embrace-vladimir-putin (accessed 1 June 2020).

61 For example, in an article on the Syrian crisis and the ISIS, Scaglione denounced the alleged irresponsibility of the United States as opposed to Russia's foreign

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Russian Connections with Italian Universities and Think Tanks

In the past decade, Russian soft power organizations, Kremlin-linked think tanks, and several major Russian academic institutions have played an increasingly important role in Moscow's active measures in Italy. These institutions seek to establish partnerships with Italian universities and think tanks to promote Russian strategic narratives and influence the perceptions of Italian audiences through public conferences, cultural events, research projects, publications, and programs that enable Italian students to attend Russian universities.

Moreover, Italian universities and think tanks are an important intelligence target for Russian secret services.[62] Counterintelligence experts have warned that Russian intelligence and security agencies regularly use events and programs organized by Russian and Kremlin-linked think tanks, foundations, and academic institutions to spot and recruit Western students, academics, and think tankers as covert assets or agents of influence. All Kremlin-linked foreign policy think tanks have deep ties to Russian secret services, and perform both analytical and intelligence activities for the Russian state.[63]

As will be detailed below, a number of Russian and Kremlin-connected institutions have been extremely active in developing partnerships with Italian universities and think tanks. These partnerships are especially visible at conferences, co-organized by Russian and Italian institutions and focused on Russian and post-Soviet affairs, as well as other foreign policy and geopolitical issues.

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policy, which he considered more rational, principled, and coherent. Fulvio Scaglione, "Per Fortuna c'è l'Impero Del Male!," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 3 December 2015, http://www.famigliacristiana.it/articolo/per-fortuna-c-e-l-impero-del-male.aspx (accessed 1 June 2020).

62 Interviews with Italian counterintelligence experts conducted by Luigi Sergio Germani in October, 2019.

63 Smagliy, "Hybrid Analytica," 15.

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As mentioned earlier, the Russian and Kremlin-connected institutions active in Italy include: Rossotrudnichestvo (which manages the Russian Center for Science and Culture in Rome), the Russkii Mir Foundation, the Gorchakov Fund, the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation (based in Paris), the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute (based in Berlin), PICREADI-Creative Diplomacy, and the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC).

The Russkii Mir Foundation runs three centers of Russian culture in Italy: at the University of Milan, the University of Pisa, and L'Orientale University in Naples. The Foundation has also recognized the "Conoscere Eurasia" (Knowing Eurasia) Cultural Association in Verona as a Russkii Mir center.[64] Antonio Fallico, president of the "Conoscere Eurasia" association, is Honorary Consul of Russia in Verona, as well as the president of the bank Banca Intesa Russia. Reportedly, he is a key facilitator of Italian-Russian energy and business relationships.[65]

In a lengthy interview with the online journal *Glavkom* published in 2016, Pakhlyovska, professor at the University of Rome "La Sapienza," has observed:

> The Russkii Mir Foundation, despite the [economic] crisis in Russia, stays focused and works hard. Even reputable [Italian] intellectuals "stand in line" to receive "Putin's money," because Europe's financial crisis has hit universities rather hard. Professors of Russian history get [financial] opportunities to organize conferences, publish books, and establish student exchanges, and such opportunities are simply unavailable for other experts in Slavic studies.[66]

It should also be highlighted that in recent years a number of Italian universities have established partnerships with Russian academic institutions in the field of political science and international relations, especially with MGIMO, the Moscow State Institute of Inter-

64 For more information about "Conoscere Eurasia," see "Associazione Conoscere Eurasia, 2017," *Conoscere Eurasia*, 2017, http://conoscereeurasia.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Brochure_Association-2017-IT.pdf (accessed 1 June 2020).

65 Marco Atella, "L'uomo del gas," *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 29 November 2010, https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2010/11/29/luomo-del-gas/79352/ (accessed 1 June 2020).

66 Pakhlyovska, "V Italii praktychno nemaie lideriv hromadianskoi dumky."

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national Relations, which is involved in pro-Kremlin influence activities in the West. MGIMO rector Anatolii Torkunov recognized that academic diplomacy was used as a propaganda weapon by the Soviet leadership. He openly stated: "Since the Soviet era, Russia has boasted a wealth of experience in attracting foreign students. Importantly, the USSR, for a long time, used higher education as a geopolitical tool and as an 'ideological weapon' at the time of confrontation and the Cold War, long before the term 'soft power' was coined."[67] These practices have survived the collapse of the Soviet Union, and are popular today among the members of the Russian intelligence community as they were before 1991.

To further illustrate the depth of interconnectedness that unites Italian universities and think tanks, and their partners, Russian soft power organizations, think tanks, and universities, and to highlight the *Russlandversteher* views expressed by leading Italian academics and experts, a more detailed discussion seems appropriate.

Free International University of Social Studies (LUISS), Rome

LUISS, one of Italy's most prestigious private universities, is promoted by the General Confederation of Italian Industry (Confindustria). In recent years, LUISS has established a partnership with MGIMO that offers students a double Master's degree in Governance and Global Affairs in their jointly supervised program. In addition, students in the MGIMO-LUISS program are offered curricular internships at ENEL Russia which is a key asset of ENEL, the Italian energy company in Russia. Commenting on the LUISS-MGIMO-ENEL partnership established in 2015 the then LUISS rector Massimo Egidi stressed that this partnership strengthened the scientific and cultural relationships that unite Russia and Italy.[68] A

67 Anatoly Torkunov, "Education as a Soft Power Instrument of Russia's Foreign Policy," *Russian International Affairs Council*, 6 March 2013, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/education-as-a-soft-power-instrument-of-russia-s-foreign-pol/ (accessed 1 June 2020); quoted in Smagliy, "Hybrid Analytica."

68 "La LUISS in Russia per due nuove partnership," *LUISS*, 9 June 2015, https://www.luiss.it/news/2015/06/09/la-luiss-russia-due-nuove-partnership (accessed 1 June 2020).

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few months before signing the agreement in Moscow, Mariasilvia Ciola, head of the LUISS delegation that visited MGIMO, stated that the forthcoming partnership was "also a political operation": despite the worsening state of relations between Russia and the West, "academic exchanges remain."[69]

Raffaele Marchetti, LUISS Deputy Rector for Internationalization and Associate Professor in International Affairs, is the leading figure of LUISS's International Relations and Strategic Studies programs. Marchetti cooperates closely with the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute (Berlin) that was created and funded by the Russian oligarch and former KGB general Vladimir Yakunin.[70] The Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute is a Kremlin-connected think tank which conveys sophisticated Russian strategic narratives about world affairs to Western political and intellectual élite audiences. Marchetti is the editor of the series "World Politics and Dialogues of Civilizations,"[71] linked to the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute's research program, as well as one of the ten experts of the Dialogue of Civilizations Endowment Fund that supports the Institute's activities and provides funding for the media, think tanks, research institutes, and educational institutions.[72] Held in Rome on 14–15 June 2018, a jointly organized conference entitled "Africa-Europe Relationships: A Multi-Stakeholder Perspective" is an example of cooperation between LUISS (and in particular its School of Government) and the Dialogue of Civilizations Research

69 "Luiss punta su Mosca e Pietroburgo, aumento scambi accademici," *Askanews*, 2 February 2015, http://www.askanews.it/esteri/2015/02/02/luiss-punta-su-mosca-e-pietroburgo-aumento-scambi-accademici-pn_20150202_00179/ (accessed 1 June 2020).

70 For further information about the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute, see Smagliy, "Hybrid Analytica."

71 For a description of the series "World Politics and Dialogues of Civilizations," see https://www.routledge.com/World-Politics-and-Dialogues-of-Civilizations/book-series/DOC (accessed 1 June 2020).

72 For further details about the Fund, see "About the Foundation," *DOC Endowment Fund*, 2020, http://dofc-foundation.org/smi/experts/, http://dofc-foundation.org/about/ (accessed 1 June 2020).

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Institute. The topic of this event is of particular importance to Italy, and Marchetti played a significant role in arranging this forum.[73]

Marchetti's views about Russian's role in the geopolitical arena are close to those of the *Russlandversteher*. In April 2014, at the time of the Donbas war,[74] Marchetti stated in a television interview that a possible, although difficult, solution to the conflict in Ukraine could be the division of the country in two halves (east and west) or the so-called federalization of Ukraine. Both of these solutions, especially the latter, are advocated by the Kremlin.[75] In November 2017, interviewed by *Sputnik Italia* about American-Russian relations, Marchetti stated that Russiagate, the accusation of Russia's illegal interference in the 2016 U.S. elections, "[was] just the tip of the iceberg of American Russophobia," and the main obstacle that impeded dialogue between Washington and Moscow on major international security issues such as Syria, Ukraine, and North Korea.[76]

A key course in strategic studies at LUISS is taught by Lucio Caracciolo, founder and director of the geopolitical magazine *Limes* mentioned earlier, and by Germano Dottori who, together with Caracciolo, represents the *Russlandversteher* school of thought. In an interview with *Start Magazine*, Dottori, who has published a number of geopolitical analyses in *Sputnik Italia*,[77] argues that NATO can still play a relevant role, if Washington and the Western countries get rid of their "anti-Russian obsessions, and NATO ceases to be an anti-Russian alliance and becomes an anti-China alliance."[78]

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73 "Africa-Europe Relationships: A Multi-Stakeholder Perspective," *LUISS*, 4 June 2018, https://www.luiss.it/evento/2018/06/14/africa-europe-relationships-multi-stakeholder-perspective (accessed 1 June 2020).

74 For the interview, see "Intervista a Raffaele Marchetti sulla crisi ucraina," *You Tube*, 16 April 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDyh12B3GR4 (accessed 1 June 2020).

75 Kateryna Dronova, "Federalization Problem: Russia vs. Ukraine," *Vox Ukraine*, 3 May 2014, https://voxukraine.org/en/56/ (accessed 1 June 2020).

76 Tatiana Santi, "Putin e Trump: un dialogo osteggiato," *Sputnik Italia,* 12 November 2017, https://it.sputniknews.com/opinioni/201711125272080-putin-trump-dialogo-osteggiato/ (accessed 1 June 2020).

77 See https://it.sputniknews.com/authors/germano_dottori/ (accessed 1 June 2020).

78 Marco Orioles, "La Nato o diventa anti Cina o muore (e basta ossessioni anti-Russia). Parla il prof. Dottori (Luiss)," *Start Magazine*, 4 April 2019, https://www.startmag.it/mondo/cina-nato-russia-dottori-luiss/ (accessed 1 June 2020).

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In December 2018, LUISS University Press released a book entitled *La marcia russa* (The Russian March).[79] The book was authored by Antonio Badini, former career diplomat and adjunct professor at LUISS, who in a radio interview explained that Putin was right when he stated that the collapse of the USSR was the "largest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century," in the sense that after the Soviet Union's demise, a unipolar order had emerged, dominated by the United States. Badini posited that the United States had used its power badly, remaining the source of many most recent global problems. Importantly, Badini emphasized Putin's excellent leadership skills. In contrast to Yeltsin who had accepted Russia's submission to the West, Putin was able to restore Russia's national pride and dignity.[80]

University of Rome "La Sapienza"

The University of Rome "La Sapienza" is a major public university in Italy. It has established double degree programs in Business Management with MGIMO,[81] the University of Moscow,[82] and the North Caucasus Federal University of Stavropol.[83] Also, Sapienza has routinely organized events focused on Russia in partnership with several Kremlin soft power organizations.

A key figure of Sapienza's cooperation with Russia is Antonello Folco Biagini, professor of History of Eastern Europe, and un-

79 Antonio Badini, *La marcia russa. Vladimir Putin e la costruzione del potere mondiale* (Rome: LUISS University Press, 2018).

80 Massimiliano Coccia, "Le parole e le cose: conversazione con Antonio Badini sul libro 'La marcia russa. Vladimir Putin e la costruzione del potere mondiale' (LUISS Press)," *Radio Radicale*, 4 March 2019, http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/567461/le-parole-e-le-cose-conversazione-con-antonio-badini-sul-libro-la-marcia-russa (accessed 2 June 2020).

81 For double degree programs in Business Management with MGIMO, see https://web.uniroma1.it/dip_management/double-degrees/double-degrees.

82 For double degree programs in Business Management with the University of Moscow, see https://web.uniroma1.it/dip_management/mgimo-university-moscow-russia.

83 For double degree programs in Business Management with the North Caucasus Federal University of Stavropol, see https://web.uniroma1.it/dip_management/north-caucasus-federal-university-russia.

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til recently Deputy Rector for Cooperation and International Relations of the university. He is currently president of the Roma Sapienza Foundation and Rector of Unitelma Sapienza, an on-line university closely linked to Sapienza. Biagini is also the Director of CEMAS, the University's interdepartmental center for scientific research and cooperation with Eurasia, the Mediterranean, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

On 29–30 March, 2017, in collaboration with Rossotrudnichestvo's Russian Center for Science and Culture in Rome, CEMAS held a conference entitled "What Is the Future of Italian-Russian Relations: Strategic Interdependence and Economic Relations in the Euro-Mediterranean Region." The event highlighted the economic, political and strategic interdependence of Italy, Europe, and Russia.[84]

On 5 October 2018, together with the Gorchakov Fund and the Italy-based Institute of Eurasian Studies, the Roma Sapienza Foundation organized a conference that advocated the normalization of relations with Russia, viewed as a strategic partner in resolving international security challenges. The conference, entitled "Russia—Europe, Confrontation and Dialogue" and chaired by Biagini, included speeches by several Russian officials and experts, such as Sergei S. Razov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Italy, and Leonid V. Drachevskii, Director of the Gorchakov Fund.[85]

Another influential Sapienza academic, as well as *Russlandversteher*, is Eugenio Di Rienzo, professor of Modern History[86] and author of the book *Il conflitto russo-ucraino* (The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict).[87] Di Rienzo has argued that his views about Russia are similar to those of American "realist" foreign policy experts: "I can perhaps agree that I sympathize with the Russian Federation, but I

84 For more details about this conference, see https://www.sisp.it/in-evidenza/conferenza-quale-futuro-per-le-relazioni-italo-russe-interdipendenza-strategica-e-relazioni-economiche-sullo-scenario-euro-mediterraneo-roma-29-30-marzo.

85 For the conference program, see https://www.fondazionesapienza.uniroma1.it/sites/default/files/programma%2005.10.2018_2.pdf.

86 For Di Rienzo's CV, see https://web.uniroma1.it/disp/sites/default/files/Di Rienzo.pdf.

87 Eugenio Di Rienzo, *Il conflitto russo-ucraino. Geopolitica del nuovo dis(ordine) mondiale* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2015).

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must add that this sympathy view is similar to the one held, after the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, by Henry Kissinger, Jack Foust Matlock (former U.S. Ambassador to Russia), Doug Bandow (formerly Ronald Reagan's Special Assistant for foreign policy), and many other influential American analysts."[88] Di Rienzo is certain that in Kyiv the United States supported a coup d'état, aimed at pushing Ukraine into NATO and disintegrating Russia as a great power; yet Putin did not allow such a scenario to take place and "showed his claws," restoring Russia's influence over the region.

Ca' Foscari University, Venice

On 6 March 2011, the Ca' Foscari University's Centre for Studies on Russian Arts (CSAR) was inaugurated by Svetlana Medvedeva, President of the Russian Foundation for Socio-Cultural Initiatives and wife of the then Russian President Dmitrii Medvedev.

At one time the Ca' Foscari University of Venice had the most important Ukrainian studies center in Italy,[89] but in recent years the university completely changed its strategy. According to Kateryna Smagliy, in 2014, the year of Russia's annexation of Crimea, the academic council of Ca' Foscari University in Venice made a unanimous decision to award the Russian Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinskii, who supported the rehabilitation of Stalin, the title of honorary professor. As many as 226 Italian academics and intellectuals signed an open letter protesting this decision. Because of this scandal, Medinskii cancelled his visit to the university. The university's then Deputy Rector, Silvia Burini, flew to Moscow to give the award to Medinskii in person. Burini currently serves as director of the Ca' Foscari University's CSAR.[90]

88 Eugenio Di Rienzo, "Io, censurato (democraticamente) perché filo-russo," *Il Giornale*, 19 July 2016, http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/spettacoli/io-censurato-democraticamente-perch-filo-russo-1286153.html (accessed 2 June 2020).

89 Pakhlyovska, "V Italii praktychno nemaie lideriv hromadianskoi dumky."

90 Smagliy, "Hybrid Analytica."

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University of Urbino

On 3 June 2019, the University of Urbino signed a memorandum of understanding with MGIMO that envisaged joint academic activities, including joint research projects, publications, and scientific conferences, as well as the recognition of double degrees.[91] Led by the Rector of the University Vilberto Stocchi, the Italian delegation visited Moscow where they signed the cooperation agreement with MGIMO. Professor Igor Pellicciari was among other members of this delegation. Interestingly, beyond the fact that he teaches courses on the history of international relations at the University of Urbino, Pellicciari is also the Honorary Consul of the Russian Federation in Bologna and the Emilia Romagna Region.

Link Campus University (Rome)

Link Campus University is a private university in Rome that specializes in international studies, and security and intelligence studies. The university's president is Vincenzo Scotti, former Italian Minister of Internal Affairs. In 2017, together with the Lomonosov Moscow State University, Link Campus University established a master's program in "Globalization, Governance and International Understanding—Russian and East European Studies." The scientific board of the master's program includes three senior Moscow State University academics: Ivan Ilyin (Dean of the Faculty of Global Studies), Ivan Aleshkovskii (Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Global Studies); and Aleksandr Chumakov (Professor at the Faculty of Global Studies).[92] When the program was launched in 2017, one of the members of the scientific board of the program was Ivan Timofeev, director of programs at the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC).[93]

91 For the memorandum of understanding between the University of Urbino and MGIMO, see "Uniurb-MGIMO: firmato protocollo di cooperazione internazionale," *Uniamo*, 12 June 2019, https://uniamo.uniurb.it/protocollo-intesa-uniurb-mgimo/ (accessed 2 June 2020).

92 For the Scientific Committee of the master's program, see https://master.unilink.it/master-in-globalisation-governance-and-international-understanding/.

93 Luciano Capone, "Il link di Mifsud è con la Russia," *Il Foglio*, 8 October 2019, https://www.ilfoglio.it/politica/2019/10/08/gallery/il-link-di-mifsud-e-con-la-russia-279067/ (accessed 2 June 2020).

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In October 2016, Link Campus University signed an ambitious agreement with Moscow State University to establish a Russian-Italian Center for Science and Education in Rome, aimed at "the strategic development and coordination of scientific and educational cooperation between the universities of the Russian Federation and Italy."[94] The agreement, however, was not implemented for reasons that remain unclear. One of the key Link Campus University academics who was involved in negotiating the partnership with Moscow State University, the Maltese professor Joseph Mifsud, disappeared in November 2017 after being identified as a key figure in U.S. Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.[95] According to the Mueller report released in April 2019, one of Mifsud's main Russian contacts was the aforementioned Ivan Timofeev.[96]

Institute of Advanced Studies in Geopolitics and Auxiliary Sciences (IsAG)

IsAG was established in Rome in July 2010 by Tiberio Graziani who had previously worked with the prominent Italian neo-Eurasianist Claudio Mutti as editor of the *Eurasia* journal. Although Graziani was connected to the radical right neo-Eurasianist milieu in the past, he strove to create an academic image for IsAG by developing contacts and partnerships with several Italian universities and by involving mainstream *Russlandversteher* academics in its activities.

In December 2011, in his interview with *Vatican Radio*, Graziani discussed the anti-regime protests that were then growing in

94 For the agreement between Link Campus University and Lomonosov Moscow State University, see https://www.unilink.it/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Agreement-Lomonosov-Link.pdf (accessed 2 June 2020).

95 Tim Lister and Nic Robertson, "Academic at Heart of Clinton 'Dirt' Claim Vanishes, Leaving Trail of Questions," *CNN*, 10 November 2017, https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/08/politics/joseph-mifsud-trump-russia-investigation/index.html (accessed 2 June 2020).

96 *Report on the Investigation Into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election*, vol. I (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, March 2019), 88; also available at *U.S. Department of Justice*, 2020, https://www.justice.gov/storage/report.pdf (accessed 2 June 2020).

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Russia, arguing that these protests were provoked by U.S. soft power operations, and explaining that U.S. policy (which he described as the "geopolitics of chaos") sought to destabilize nations in the Mediterranean region and in Central Asia with the ultimate objective of inciting anti-regime uprisings in Russia.[97] This was a recurrent Russian strategic narrative at the time.

Under Graziani's direction IsAG established partnerships[98] with several Russian soft power organizations and Kremlin-linked think tanks, including the Paris-based Institute for Democracy and Cooperation,[99] led by the former State Duma deputy Nataliia Narochnitskaia; and the World Public Forum (WPF) Dialogue of Civilizations, the predecessor of the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute mentioned earlier, which was established by Vladimir Yakunin.[100] In 2012 IsAG launched *Geopolitica*, a quarterly journal. The *Geopolitica* scientific committee included, among others: Sergei Nikolaievich Baburin, leader of the nationalist party Russian All-People's Union; Kees van der Pijl, author of Flight *MH17. Ukraine and the new Cold War. Prism of Disaster*, which contained disinformation narratives on the MH-17 incident; as well as the abovementioned Italian experts Eugenio Di Rienzo and Sergio Romano.[101] Despite the objective "to spread the study of geopolitics and to stimulate a broad and non-ideological debate" reflected in *Geopolitica*'s mission statement, the majority of its articles supported Russian strategic narratives.[102]

97 "T. Graziani sulle elezioni russe a Sky TG24 e Radio Vaticana," *Eurasia*, 12 December 2011, https://www.eurasia-rivista.com/t-graziani-sulle-elezioni-russe-a-sky-tg24-e-radio-vatic/ (accessed 2 June 2020).

98 For IsAG partners, see https://web.archive.org/web/20120406160858/http://www.istituto-geopolitica.eu/partners.

99 See the official website of the Institute of Democracy and Cooperation at http://www.idc-europe.org/en.

100 See the history and objectives of the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute at http://dofc-foundation.org/programmes/.

101 For *Geopolitica*'s scientific committee, see https://web.archive.org/web/20120323143200/http://www.geopolitica-rivista.org/comitato-scientifico.

102 See, for example, an article, written in December 2014 by an associate researcher of IsAG who approvingly quoted Putin's justification for Russia's annexation of Crimea, without mentioning the illegal nature of the so-called referendum. Alessandra Benignetti, "Il discorso di Putin alla Nazione," *Geopolitica*, 24 December 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20141227082215/http://www.

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In 2013 IsAG was included in a list of foreign policy think tanks, financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[103] From 2013 to 2015, IsAG was a key partner of the University of Rome "La Sapienza." Together they established a master's program on "Geopolitics and Global Security," which was attended not only by graduate students but also by Italian military personnel.

Until 2017 IsAG was very active in organizing conferences and seminars. Many of these events were focused on Russian and post-Soviet affairs and arranged in partnership with Russian soft power organizations and institutions. For example, on 27 November 2014, IsAG organized a conference in Rome in collaboration with the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the magazine *Russia Beyond the Headlines* (now *Russia Beyond*), and the "Conoscere Eurasia" Association. This event, known under the title "Great Eurasian Infrastructures: New Industrialization and the Geopolitics of Peace," stressed the importance of deepening Russian-Italian economic relations despite the sanctions imposed by the EU.[104]

In 2017 Graziani left IsAG[105] and created a new think tank known as Vision & Global Trends.[106] The latter was listed as a media partner at the International Conference "Russia and Europe: Topical Issues of Contemporary International Journalism," held in Rome on 5 September 2019, at Rossotrudnichestvo's Russian Center

geopolitica-rivista.org/27248/il-discorso-alla-nazione-di-vladimir-putin/ (accessed 2 June 2020).

103 For more details, see https://web.archive.org/web/20150205200245/http://www.esteri.it/mae/resource/doc/2015/01/20150123_ricognizione_enti.pdf.

104 Myriam Pulvirenti, "La crescita passa per le infrastrutture," *Russia Beyond*, 28 November 2014, https://it.rbth.com/societa/2014/11/28/la_crescita_passa_per_le_infrastrutture_33629 (accessed 2 June 2020).

105 In 2017, Daniele Scalea, IsAG's Scientific Director, also left the institute and joined a new think tank, the Machiavelli Center for Strategic and Political Studies (https://www.centromachiavelli.com/). The Center's objectives aim "at providing Italy with ideas and strategies for a sovereigntist Italy." Several articles published by the Machiavelli Center reflect a *Russlandversteher* position. See Paolo Becchi, "Il caso Putin. Illiberale o post-liberale?," *Centro Machiavelli*, 10 July 2019, https://www.centromachiavelli.com/2019/07/10/becchi-il-caso-putin-illiberale-o-post-liberale/ (accessed 2 June 2020).

106 See the official website of the Vision & Global Trends think tank at https://www.vision-gt.eu/about-us/.

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for Science and Culture. This conference was organized by the *Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn* magazine (The International Affairs) with the support of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Media of the Russian Federation.[107] One of the main messages emphasized by the conference was that Western media spread disinformation about Russia. The crises in Ukraine and Syria were among other topics of the conference.

Graziani is often interviewed by *Sputnik Italia* and other Russian media. In his interviews, Graziani stresses the need for Italy to establish a strategic partnership with Moscow and describes the Italian mainstream media as Russophobic.[108] IsAG continues to operate but under a different management, and appears to be less active than in the past.

The Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI)

The Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) was founded in Milan in 1934. It is one of Italy's two top think tanks (the other is the Rome-based Istituto di Affari Internazionali) and has funding from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Within ISPI, *Russlandversteher* positions coexist with more balanced and critical analysis, and even with Atlanticist ones. ISPI's Russia, Caucasus, and Central Asia Center is headed by Aldo Ferrari, professor at Ca' Foscari University in Venice. In Ferrari's July 2014 ISPI paper entitled "Beyond Ukraine: Crimea against Europe?," he argued that "in the subsequent Ukrainian crisis (*Editor's note:* Maidan) Russia witnessed a coup d'état, a violent regime change by an opposition organized at least partly in a paramilitary

107 For more about the conference held at Rossotrudnichestvo's Russian Center for Science and Culture in Rome, see "'Russia and Europe' Conference," *International Affairs*, 13 August 2019, http://en.interaffairs.ru/events/976-russia-and-europe-conference-in-rome-discussion-outlining-topical-issues-of-international-journalism.html (accessed 2 June 2020).

108 Maxim Maximov, "Mosca e Roma smarrite tra dialogo, sanzioni e schizofrenia dei media," *Sputnik Italia*, 12 December 2018, https://it.sputniknews.com/opinioni/201812106931969-mosca-roma-smarriti-tra-dialogo-sanzioni-schizofrenia-dei-media/ (accessed 2 June 2020).

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manner, enthusiastically supported by the West."[109] In a 2015 ISPI publication, Ferrari built on Professor of the University of Chicago John Mearsheimer's interpretation of the situation in Ukraine. Mearsheimer has suggested that "the United States and its European allies shared most of the responsibility for the crisis."[110] In Ferrari's view, the West challenged Moscow's security interests by pushing NATO and EU expansion eastwards, thus sharing the responsibility for the turmoil in Ukraine.[111]

A subsequent ISPI paper co-authored by Ferrari states that Moscow does not challenge the fundamental rules of the international legal system, but essentially wants to gain greater importance within it.[112] Moreover, in a March 2018 interview, Ferrari stated that Western accusations that Russia had interfered in Western elections by supporting populist forces are "idiotic."[113]

ISPI has also partnered with the Russian soft power organization "The Creative Diplomacy Initiative" (PICREADI), a non-government Kremlin-sponsored organization established in 2010. ISPI and PICREADI organized a conference entitled "Russian Foreign Policy: Facing International Turbulence" which was held in Milan on 13 May 2019.[114] Nataliia Burlinova, who leads PICREADI, and Ivan Timofeev (Russian International Affairs Council-RIAC) were among the conference speakers, along with ISPI Russia experts and Italian journalists.

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109 Aldo Ferrari, "Oltre la Crimea Russia contro Europa?," *ISPI/Milan*, 18 July 2014, https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/ispi_-_oltrelacrimea_0_0.pdf (accessed 2 June 2020).

110 John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (2014): 77–89.

111 Aldo Ferrari, "EU-Russia: What Went Wrong?," in *Beyond Ukraine: EU and Russia in Search of a New Relation*, ed. Aldo Ferrari (Novi Ligure: Edizioni Epoké, 2015), 32–33; also available at https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/beyond-ukraine-eu-and-russia-search-new-relation-13424.

112 Aldo Ferrari and Eleonora Tafuro Ambrosetti, "Russia and China: Countering the Dominance of the West," in *Russia and China: Anatomy of a Partnership*, eds. Aldo Ferrari and Eleonora Tafuro Ambrosetti (Milano: LediPublishing, 2019), 17–18; also available at https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/russia-and-china-anatomy-partnership-23001.

113 Luca La Mantia, "Ecco perché Putin non ha rivali," *In Terris*, 17 March 2018, https://www.interris.it/esteri/ecco-perch-putin-non-ha-rivali (accessed 2 June 2020).

114 For the details of the conference, see https://www.ispionline.it/it/eventi/evento/russian-foreign-policy-facing-international-turbulence.

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The Italian Society for International Organizations (SIOI)

SIOI was established in 1944 and has played an important historical role in the making of Italian foreign policy during the Cold War.[115] Former Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini is the current President of SIOI, which is funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is also head of the Strategic Studies and Diplomatic Sciences master's degree program at the above-mentioned Link Campus University. The institute offers preparatory courses for entry examinations for future diplomats and organizes master's programs and training courses on many subjects, including diplomatic relations, human rights, security and intelligence, geopolitics, and EU institutions.[116]

SIOI has organized events together with the Gorchakov Fund and the Russian Embassy in Italy. For instance, on 22 September 2015, SIOI, the Gorchakov Fund, and the Institute for Eurasian Studies (a think tank that is also chaired by Franco Frattini)[117] held a conference that discussed the challenges of transnational crime in which Viktor Ivanov was one of the three key speakers. A former KGB general, he was the leading figure of the *siloviki* élite and the then head of Russia's Federal Narcotics Control Service (FSNK).[118]

Furthermore, SIOI, the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Italy, the Italian Society of Military History, and the geopolitical magazine *Limes* organized a conference entitled "The Ukrainian regional crisis in the global geopolitical context,"[119] held on 24 September 2015. Conference speakers were high-level Russian officials

115 For SIOI history, see https://www.sioi.org/chi-siamo/la-nostra-storia/.

116 For SIOI international masters and courses, see https://www.sioi.org/en/activity/international-training-2/.

117 The Institute for Eurasian Studies also often partners with the Gorchakov Fund. The director of the Institute for Eurasian Studies, Andrea Giannotti, is a historian who teaches at the University of Pisa and MGIMO, and has authored a book about the role of Yurii Andropov in Soviet politics: *Tra partito e KGB. Per una ricostruzione del ruolo di Jurij Andropov nella politica sovietica* (Torino: Giappichelli, 2018).

118 For the event, see https://www.sioi.org/events/a-70-anni-da-yalta-come-affrontare-le-nuove-sfide-geostrategiche-fra-legalita-e-lotta-al-crimine-transnazionale/.

119 See more about this event at http://www.limesonline.com/la-crisi-regionale-ucraina-nel-contesto-geopolitico-globale-dibattito-a-roma/86483; and at https:

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and Italian experts, but no speaker from Ukraine was invited despite the fact that the discussion focused on the Ukrainian crisis. Among the speakers were Andrei Kortunov (Director of the Russian International Affairs Council-RIAC), Konstantin Zatulin (First Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee on CIS Affairs and Contacts with Fellow Countrymen), and Vitalii Tretyakov (Dean of the Higher School of Television at Moscow's Lomonosov State University).

Moreover, Russian soft power institutions sponsor and promote historical accounts narrated by former directors of the Russian security services. On 5 October 2018, a presentation of the Italian edition of Yevgenii Primakov's book *A World without Russia* was held at SIOI. Primakov was a Russian academic, politician, and diplomat who served as Chairman of the USSR Soviet of the Union (1998–1999), Director of Foreign Intelligence Service (1991–1996), and Minister of Foreign Affairs (1996–1998). The translation of Primakov's book into Italian was sponsored by the Gorchakov Fund and the Institute for Eurasian Studies. Leonid Drachevskii, Director of the Gorchakov Fund, was one of the speakers at this event. The Italian edition of the book was also presented in Moscow.[120]

Conclusion

Italian intellectuals and politicians have historically been sympathetic toward Russia. Although belonging to opposing military blocs during the Cold War, the USSR and Italy continued to maintain good economic and political relations. Moreover, as a result of the Italian Communist Party's enormous cultural influence on Ital-

//www.sioi.org/events/tavola-rotonda-la-crisi-regionale-ucraina-nel-contesto-geopolitico-globale/.

120 "A Presentation of an Italian Edition of the Book by Yevgeny Primakov Took Place at the Embassy of Italy," *Fond Gorchakova*, 27 November 2018, https://gorchakovfund.ru/en/news/view/a-presentation-of-an-italian-edition-of-a-book-by-yevgeny-primakov-took-place-at-the-embassy-of-ital/; see also https://www.sioi.org/events/evento-un-mondo-senza-la-russia-presentazione-del-libro-di-evgenij-m-primakov/ (accessed 2 June 2020).

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ian society during the Cold War, anti-American sentiments permeated societal discourse, even though Italy's foreign policy remained Atlanticist and pro-American. Anti-Americanism among the Italian political élites and broader audiences was strengthened by KGB active measures, and these attitudes persisted, having survived the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In the early 1990s, several Italian radical right-wing intellectuals, who began to cooperate intensively with Russian ultranationalists, believed that they could exploit the ideological vacuum that emerged after the collapse of communism to expand the influence of neo-Eurasianism. At the time they were unsuccessful. Yet twenty years later, after the rise of nationalist-populist forces in Italy, neo-Eurasianism and the radical pro-Russian and anti-Western mindset began to enter the mainstream of Italian intellectual and political debates.

In 2004–2005, the Kremlin began to rebuild and expand Russia's covert and overt active measures apparatus, establishing soft power organizations and new Kremlin-linked think tanks. Russian active measures sought to promote both neo-Eurasianist and *Russlandversteher* narratives in Italy. The *Russlandversteher*, a more moderate and pragmatic pro-Russian orientation, began to increasingly dominate Italy's media and academic discourse about Russian and post-Soviet affairs. Russian governmental soft power organizations and Kremlin-linked think tanks have been extremely active in Italy since at least 2010. Their influence has become especially pronounced after Russia's military aggression against Ukraine in 2014. These institutions have frequently partnered with Italian universities and think tanks to organize conferences and thematic publications designed to reinforce pro-Kremlin narratives.

The *Russlandversteher* school of thought that adopts Russian strategic narratives on many issues (but does not directly attack NATO and the EU) today remains the most influential paradigm among Italian foreign policy experts, academics, and journalists. Several most important university postgraduate programs that are focused on geopolitics and international affairs are managed by academics and experts of *Russlandversteher* orientation. Moreover, in

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recent years several Italian universities have established partnerships with Russian academic institutions in the field of political science and international relations, especially with MGIMO, a training school for Soviet diplomats and a university where the Russian intelligence services have been actively recruiting students to prepare them as intelligence officers, undercover agents, and active measures specialists.[121]

Pro-Kremlin views, therefore, exert considerable influence on Italian culture, academia, and the expert community. As a result, Italy's public and a significant part of its political élite often find it difficult to view Russian domestic and foreign policy in a more critical manner and understand the security and ideological challenges Putinism poses to Europe and to the West. However, Russian influence does not seem to be overpowering: it has not yet led to a fundamental and irreversible change in Italy's traditional Atlanticist and Europeanist foreign policy. Moreover, there are critical voices among Italian intellectuals, journalists, think-tank experts, and political decision-makers who resist the growth of Russian influence and seek to strengthen Italy's commitment to Western democratic values and the Euro-Atlantic community.

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121 "Russian Spies Are Recruiting MGIMO Students—Proekt," *The Moscow Times*, 18 October 2019, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/10/18/russian-spies-recruit-mgimo-students-proekt-a67796 (accessed 5 June 2020).

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Russian Influence Operations in Scandinavia
The Case of Sweden's Largest Tabloid *Aftonbladet*

Martin Kragh

On 7 February 2019, the largest evening paper in the Nordic countries, *Aftonbladet*, published an article about Martin Kragh, scholar, head of the Russia and Eurasia Programme at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs in Stockholm, and researcher at the Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Uppsala University.[1] *Aftonbladet* called on the Swedish authorities to investigate Kragh because allegedly he worked for the British secret services. The claims were subsequently repeated and defended in two more consecutive articles published on 12 February and 21 February 2019, alleging, among other things, that "Martin Kragh [was] a threat to democracy."[2] These claims were false, and on 2 December 2019 the newspaper was criticised by the Swedish Press Council for violating "good journalistic practice."[3]

This Swedish case, however, reveals how a Russian influence operation might achieve success in a specific national context. The Russian influence operation that began in late 2018 and continued into 2019 primarily targeted the British government and a think

1 A lengthier Swedish-language version of this article has been accepted for publication in *Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift*. All translations from Russian, Swedish, and French were made by the author.

2 Åsa Linderborg, "Svenska medier måste hålla rent framför egen dörr," *Aftonbladet*, 7 February 2019, https://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/a/G1W8Jq/svenska-medier-maste-halla-rent-framfor-egen-dorr (accessed 12 June 2020); Åsa Linderborg, "Karin Olssons utbrott döljer sakfrågan," *Aftonbladet,* 12 February 2019, https://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/a/XwX77x/karin-olssons-utbrott-doljer-sakfragan (accessed 12 June 2020); Åsa Linderborg, "Martin Kragh är ett demokratiskt problem," *Aftonbladet,* 21 February 2019, https://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/a/0E1nm6/martin-kragh-ar-ett-demokratiskt-problem (accessed 12 June 2020).

3 "Aftonbladet fälls för kritiserad Kragh-krönika," *Sveriges Radio*, 6 December, 2019, https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2795&artikel=7361883 (accessed 12 June 2020).

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tank, the Institute for Statecraft (hereafter: IfS), that allegedly had ties to British military intelligence. Part of the strategy was to denounce and cast suspicion on Western journalists, academics, and politicians, among them Kragh.

Because of Russian and Chinese covert action, including suspected Russian cyber operations against the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Russian support for far-right political parties in Europe, and Chinese investments in the critical infrastructure and Western tech companies, the issue of influence operations conducted by foreign powers has received increasing attention in recent years.[4] Information operations, known as *influence operations or covert action,* are typically defined as an attempt to influence a target group's opinions or preferences, and thereby provoke change in its behavior.[5] These manipulations can be achieved through dissemination, reinforcement, or repression of certain types of information, as well as other tactics and strategies. For example, some researchers have closely analysed the cyber domain and social media platforms used by various states for similar purposes.[6]

4 Anton Shekhovtsov, *Russia and the Western Far Right: Tango Noir* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018); Sangkuk Lee, "China's 'Three Warfares': Origins, Applications, and Organizations," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 2 (2014): 198–221.

5 Martin Kragh and Sebastian Åsberg, "Russia's Strategy for Influence through Public Diplomacy and Active Measures," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 6 (2017): 773–816.

6 Isabella Hanson and Darren J. Lim, "Doxing Democracy: Influencing Elections via Cyber Voter Interference," *Contemporary Politics* 25, no. 2 (2019): 150–71; Steven Main, "China's Cyber Warfare: The Evolution of Strategic Doctrine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 70, no. 9 (2018): 1519–521; Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 2 (2017): 211–36; Chris Edmond, "Information Manipulation, Coordination, and Regime Change," *The Review of Economic Studies* 80, no. 4 (2013): 1422–458; Ronald J. Deibert, "The Road to Digital Unfreedom: Three Painful Truths About Social Media," *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 1 (2019): 25–39; also available at https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/the-road-to-digital-unfreedom-three-painful-truths-about-social-media/ (accessed 12 June 2020); Philip N. Howard, Samuel Woolley, and Ryan Calo, "Algorithms, Bots, and Political Communication in the U.S. 2016 Election: The Challenge of Automated Political Communication for Election Law and Administration," *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 15, no. 2 (2018): 81–93. For a discussion about methodological problems associated with measuring conflict-intensity within the cyber domain, see Brandon Valeriano and Ryan C Maness, "The

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Russian influence operations, known as active measures (*aktivnyie meropriiatiia*) in the KGB terminology, have been defined as a combination of covert and overt methods, including disinformation, media manipulation, propaganda, the use of front organizations, and funding of political parties. According to Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, the Russian security services have never discontinued the use of active measures in the post-Soviet period, although they have been given new names.[7] Cyber warfare and cyber special operations have been developed since the 1990s, contributing greatly to the arsenal of active measures. Western governments and companies, such as Microsoft, have identified the Russian Federation's military intelligence agency, known as the GRU, as the one being responsible for a series of IT attacks against European and American political, financial, and academic institutions.[8] Planting and disseminating messages that compromise a target group in a foreign country constitute a central aspect of Russian (Soviet) active measures. They should be implemented in a skillful and professional way, so that the information embedded in these messages appears to be genuine, and their origin remains unknown.[9] Russian active measures have therefore traditionally been

Dynamics of Cyber Conflict Between Rival Antagonists, 2001–11," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 3 (2014): 347–60. For a discussion about the legal aspects of cyber warfare, see William Banks, "State Responsibility and Attribution of Cyber Intrusions After *Tallinn 2.0*," *Texas Law Review* 95, no. 7 (2017): 1487–513; also available at https://texaslawreview.org/state-responsibility-attribution-cyber-intrusions-tallinn-2-0/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

7 Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, *The Compatriots: The Brutal and Chaotic History of Russia's Exiles, Emigrés, and Agents Abroad* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2019).

8 Natalia Drozdiak, David Tweed, and Stefan Nicola, "Microsoft Says Russian Hackers Targeted European Think Tanks," *Bloomberg,* 20 February 2019, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-20/europe-think-tanks-hacked-by-russia-linked-group-microsoft-says (accessed 12 June 2020).

9 Steve Abrams, "Beyond Propaganda: Soviet Active Measures in Putin's Russia," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 15, no. 1 (2016): 5–31; Max Holland, "The Propagation and Power of Communist Security Services Dezinformatsiya," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 19, no. 1 (2006): 1–31.

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described as a game between an "operator" who initiates a disinformation campaign and an "actor" who intentionally or unintentionally disseminates disinformation.[10]

Researchers have found it difficult to fully explain the tactics that actors employ to influence democratic systems. A research gap seems apparent when influence operations are examined using the inductive approach that requires analyses of large amounts of data over time and involves the process of separating relevant data (*signal*) from garbage data (*noise*). Analyses on the aggregate level can also (mistakenly) give the impression that influence operations are products of centralised and state coordinated campaigns, an assumption that excludes the possibility of spontaneous actions by independent actors. Importantly, scholars often overlook an analysis of whether influence operations have been efficient or not, and experience difficulty in identifying the criteria that would help them assess the success of these operations.[11] Empirical case studies focused on influence operations that target organisations and individuals reveal some of these challenges but this topic remains underinvestigated.[12] More research is needed to explore how states sponsor trolling (or *doxing*) to marginalize, harass, and/or discredit journalists, researchers, and other professionals, critical of state practices.

10 Ladislav Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View* (Washington, D.C.: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1985); Ladislav Bittman, "The Use of Disinformation by Democracies," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 4, no. 2 (1990): 243–61. For a more recent and archive-based overview of KGB active measures, see Thomas Rid, *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020).

11 Alexander Lanoszka, "Disinformation in International Politics," *European Journal of International Security* 6, no. 4 (2019): 227–48.

12 Jessikka Aro, "The Cyberspace War: Propaganda and Trolling as Warfare Tools," *European View* 15, no. 1 (2016): 121–32; Jason Hannan, "Trolling Ourselves to Death? Social Media and Post-Truth Politics," *European Journal of Communication* 33, no. 2 (2018): 214–26; David Douglas, "Doxing: A Conceptual Analysis," *Ethics and Information Technology* 6, no. 18 (2016): 199–210; Hansen and Lim, "Doxing Democracy."

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Informational cascades provide an appropriate point of departure for an analysis of how an influence operation can achieve success.[13] The concept is commonly used within behavioral economics and network theory, and describes how people make identical or similar decisions in a sequence, and therefore create a sort of amplifying effect. The "trigger" of a cascade can be a specific event, for example, a natural disaster, a corruption scandal, or, as in this case, "leaked" documents. An informational cascade is thus a self-reinforcing mechanism, although it is deliberately initiated and does not arise spontaneously. It is typically initiated by actors, known as *availability entrepreneurs* who have a nuanced grasp of how public opinion can be manipulated and can steer a target group in a particular direction.

The influence effect is achieved by directing attention to a specific problem, setting an interpretative frame and attempting to promote strategically selected information. The strategic framing of an issue increases the likelihood for its visibility in the public domain, shaping people's views and beliefs. As a result, people take action on the basis of incomplete or inaccurate information.

Through a detailed empirical and time sensitive analysis, the present case study contributes to our understanding of how Russian influence campaigns operate in practice. Since the KGB era, planting articles that contained disinformation in established and popular Western news outlets has been considered a recipe for success of active measures. The Russian operators who launched the campaign analysed in this study adopted these tactics, strategically choosing the largest tabloid in the Nordic countries *Aftonbladet*, through which they disseminated disinformation. From their point of view, the campaign was likely to succeed because of the popularity and reputation of *Aftonbladet*.[14]

13 Cass R. Sunstein and Timur Kuran, "Availability Cascades and Risk Regulation," *Stanford Law Review*, no. 51 (1999): 683–768.

14 According to the tabloid's own statistics, its readership constituted approximately 3.9 million per day in 2018 (in a country of 10 million citizens), a characteristic of an established and popular news outlet. See Petter Ovander, "Rekordsommar för Aftonbladet – över 3,9 miljoner läsare varje dag," *Aftonbladet*, 3 September 2018, https://inifran.aftonbladet.se/2018/09/rekord

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The concept of informational cascades has a strong policy dimension for open democratic societies. Informational cascades implemented with the (witting or unwitting) support of local actors are often part of international campaigns, aiming to deceive and manipulate public opinion in a targeted country. In democratic states, research on influence operations and the informational cascades they provoke has important implications for policy makers. It equips them to design a set of measures to protect citizens against state and non-state actors who collect and weaponize the data in asymmetric campaigns, aiming to discredit specific individuals or groups.

The key sources for this study include materials published primarily in English, French, Russian, and Swedish in 2018 and 2019 (circa 600 articles), and documents from social media, such as Twitter (circa 21,000 tweets). They have been analysed, using quantitative and qualitative methods. This case study ultimately addresses four questions: How and why was this international campaign against the IfS's Integrity Initiative Project launched? How was it linked to the Swedish information space? Which actors played an active role in disseminating the information in Sweden, as well as internationally? How successful was this campaign and why? For clarity, the narrative has been divided in three sections. The first section offers readers the background and international context of this case. The second section traces how the campaign spread in the Swedish information space, mapping the actors who publicly participated in the campaign. The last section discusses the limitations of the study and summarizes its results.

sommar-for-aftonbladet-over-39-miljoner-lasare-varje-dag/) (accessed 12 June 2020). For more on the KGB's tactics, see Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: the KGB in Europe and the West* (London, U.K.: Penguin, 2000), 629–30. For a discussion about successful informational cascades, see Sunstein and Kuran, "Availability Cascades and Risk Regulation," 736.

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Background and International Context: From *Hack-and-Leak* to Russian State Media

On 23 November 2018 at 13:08 (CET), the French-language homepage of Russia's international media channel Sputnik published an article entitled "Anonymous Published 'Data from a United Kingdom Hybrid War Program.'"[15] This article revealed that an "anonymous" hacker group had publicized documents that allegedly showed how the British government was using a London-based front organization, the IfS, to run a secret political war. This war against Russia and Russian interests under the name of Integrity Initiative was supposedly coordinated with other European countries. At 23:58 the same evening, the Russian news agency RIA Novosti published an article entitled "Overview: Hackers Reveal Great Britain's Anti-Russian Programme and Its Involvement in Foreign Policy."[16] By this time, within the course of one day, the Russian state media had disseminated a total of 62 articles on the topic of Great Britain's "hybrid war" against Russia in at least three different languages (English, French, and Russian). These 62 articles constituted the beginning of a Russian media campaign that escalated through publishing more than 600 articles between November 2018 and February 2019. A great majority of these articles were disseminated through Russian state media, such as Sputnik, RIA Novosti, and RT (formerly Russia Today). The primary target of this campaign seemed to be the British government in general and the IfS in particular.

The internal working documents of the IfS became the central element of this campaign. In a *hack-and-leak* operation, unknown hackers (the sender(s) had used the name "Anonymous") made these documents available to broader audiences in a series of posts on the website www.cyberguerilla.org.[17] The first documents, that included

15 "Anonymous a publié les 'données d'un programme de guerre hybride du Royaume-Uni'," *Sputnik France*, 23 November 2018, https://fr.sputniknews.com/international/201811231039019703-anonymous-publications-donnees-programme-royaume-uni/ (accessed 2 May 2019).

16 "Khakery rasskazali ob antirossiiskoi programme Britanii," *RIA Novosti*, 24 November 2018, https://ria.ru/20181124/1533418305.html (accessed 2 May 2019).

17 As per 20 March 2020, it appears that the website www.cyberguerilla.com can no longer be accessed.

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lists describing the Integrity Initiative's alleged "covert" and pan-European network divided into several regional "clusters," were published on 5 November 2018 and subsequently shared on the same day by the Twitter account @NanaSilvergrim (under the name "Anonymous" whose profile contains the website nanasilvergrim.cyberguerilla.com), the Twitter account @lilithlela (which also uses the name "Anonymous," referencing the website lilithlela.cyberguerilla.com), and the Twitter account @TheAnonWhispers.[18] Neither of these posts were further shared or "re-tweeted" by any other accounts. It was first on 12 November 2018 that the information about the Integrity Initiative was shared by the fourth account (@GlobalAffrs) (see Table 1).[19]

Table 1. The First Six Twitter Accounts that Disseminated the Campaign against the Integrity Initiative

Twitter Accounts	Date	Shares	Number of Followers	Links to Original Tweets
@NanaSilvergrim	5 Nov. 2018	0	5,328	/NanaSilvergrim/status/1059450901746905088
@lilithlela	5 Nov. 2018	0	9,829	/lilithlela/status/1059452911711862784
@TheAnonWhispers	5 Nov. 2018	0	184	/TheAnonWhispers/status/1059508191019589636
@GlobalAffrs	12 Nov. 2018	0	102	/GlobalAffrs/status/1061929357323583488
@TewfikHamel	23 Nov. 2018	3	58	/TewfikHamel/status/1065948390826008581
@RT_russian	23 Nov. 2018	45	857,000	/RT_russian/status/1065968710899376129

Source: Author's own calculations[20]

It is still unclear who exactly it was that first hacked and disseminated the documents, but a Twitter account previously used by the established network named Anonymous denied involvement. In

18 See the original tweets here: https://twitter.com/NanaSilvergrim/status/1059450901746905088; https://twitter.com/lilithlela/status/1059452911711862784; and https://twitter.com/TheAnonWhispers/status/1059508191019589636.

19 See the original tweet here: https://twitter.com/GlobalAffrs/status/1061929357323583488.

20 This information is accurate as of 15 May 2019.

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addition, this network did not have any known ties to the website www.cyberguerilla.com, a website that had been used to disseminate false documents tied to Russian influence operations.[21] Most recently, in his new book entitled *Active Measures*, Thomas Rid was able establish connections among several Anonymous accounts, the website www.cyberguerilla.com, and the GRU, more specifically the GRU unit 74455 (a.k.a. "Fancy Bear").[22] The non-verified Anonymous accounts that spread the material about the Integrity Initiative had quite a few followers (@NanaSilvergrim had 5,328 followers, @lilithlela had 9,829 followers, and @TheAnonWhispers had 184 followers as of May 2019), and considerably fewer than the recognised Anonymous account @YourAnonNews, with approximately 1.55 million followers. The information went viral, when the sixth consecutive Twitter account, the Russian language account of RT with 857,000 followers (@RT_russian), disseminated it on 23 November.[23]

The generic name Anonymous, with its characteristic face mask as a logo, had also been used in other contexts which were traced and identified as the ones of Russian origin. Established on the Russian platform VKontakte since being barred from Facebook, the German-language website anonymousnews.ru serves as an example: its profile includes openly anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, and pro-Kremlin content.[24] The man behind this website, who was previously registered on Facebook using the name Anonymous. Kollektiv, is a German far-right extremist suspected by German authorities of having moved to either Hungary or Crimea after the police issued a felony warrant for his arrest for selling illegal weapons.[25]

21 Kragh and Åsberg, "Russia's Strategy," 782.

22 Rid, *Active Measures*, 353.

23 See the original tweet here: https://twitter.com/RT_russian/status/1065968710899376129.

24 Anton Shekhovtsov, "Conventional Bedfellows: The Russian Propaganda Machine and the Western Far Right," *Eurozine*, 27 October 2017, https://www.eurozine.com/conventional-bedfellows-the-russian-propaganda-machine-and-the-western-far-right/ (accessed 2 May 2019).

25 The story about a person behind anonymousnews.ru has been somewhat covered outside the German-language news outlets. See Stephan Dörner, "Betreiber bekannter Facebook-Hetzseite taucht unter," *Welt*, 31 May 2016, https://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/webwelt/article155855977/Betreiber-bekan

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It was through this Facebook page that a video was circulated in Russian state media in the spring of 2016, showing a group of Arab men, confessing to the rape of a Russian-German 13-year-old girl who was named as Lisa F. in the media.[26] This story inspired the Russian government to publicly accuse the German police of covering up immigration-related crimes that had detrimental effect on the Russian diaspora.[27] Subsequently, the world learned that both the rape story and the video were fake, and that the hacker network Anonymous was not involved in the affair.[28]

An analysis conducted by the independent Russian news website RBK linked several fake Facebook groups to the Internet Research Agency in St. Petersburg,[29] the same organization that was

nter-Facebook-Hetzseite-taucht-unter.html (accessed 24 June 2019); "Deutschlands größte Hetzseite: Neue Belege belasten langjährigen AfD-Mann," *Focus,* 20 May 2016, https://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/fluechtlinge-werden-als-muell-beschimpft-deutschlands-groesste-hetzseite-neue-belege-belasten-langjaehrigen-afd-mann_id_5549591.html (accessed 2 May 2019).

26 Perviy Kanal, "Avstriia vremenno priostanavlivaiet deistvie shengenskogo soglasheniia iz-za sluchaev nasiliia v Germanii." *Perviy Kanal*, 16 January 2016, https://www.1tv.ru/n/3330 (accessed 2 May 2019).

27 This case gave rise to minor protests against German authorities and the accusations of covering up immigration-related crimes. The protesters used the fact that the alleged victim was of Russian origin, implying the discriminatory practices of German authorities. The German government was of an opinion that through the fabricated story, Russia attempted to exert political pressure on Germany and to foment political polarization among the Russian diaspora. See Paul Carrel and Andreas Rinke, "German-Russian Ties Feel Cold War-style Chill over Rape Case," *Reuters*, 1 February 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-russia/german-russian-ties-feel-cold-war-style-chill-over-rape-case-idUSKCN0VA31O (accessed 13 June 2020); Damien McGuinness, "Russia Steps into Berlin 'Rape' Storm Claiming German Cover-Up," *BBC News*, 27 January 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-eu-35413134 (accessed 13 June 2020).

28 "Raspiatyi malchik, chast vtoraya," *Meduza*, 18 January 2016, https://meduza.io/feature/2016/01/18/raspyatyy-malchik-chast-vtoraya (accessed 2 May 2019); Mario Rönsch, "Kapitel 3: Das Ende von Anonymous: Kollektiv kann Mario Rönsch nicht aufhalten," *Süddeutsche Zeitung,* 28 March 2018, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/digital/mario-roensch-deutsche-ermittler-nehmen-untergetauchten-rechtsextremen-in-budapest-fest-1.3923465-4 (accessed 13 June 2020).

29 Polina Rusiaieva and Andreii Zakharov, "Rassledovanie RBK: kak 'fabrika trollei' porabotala na vyborakh v SShA," *RBK,* 17 October 2017, https://www.rbc.ru/magazine/2017/11/59e0c17d9a79470e05a9e6c1 (accessed 13 June 2020).

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accused by U.S. state agencies of attempting to meddle in the U.S. presidential election in 2016.[30] The Twitter account "Anonymous Poland," which posed as a Polish branch of the hacker network and has been linked to Russia's GRU, was one of the fake accounts which, together with "DCLeaks" and "Guccifer 2.0," disseminated presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's hacked emails during the 2016 election campaign.[31] This is essentially the same group that appeared under the pseudonym "Fancy Bear" which was linked to the cyberattack against the Swedish Sports Confederation and the international anti-doping organization WADA.[32] Russian RT has also used the Anonymous-collective's logo in its marketing campaigns.[33] Unsurprisingly, the Russian state media outlets that reported on the Integrity Initiative, as well as the Swedish actors who later followed up with their own campaigns, never expressed any concerns about the use of suspicious materials that might have been emanating from the Russian intelligence services.

The International Dimension

The IfS, a London-based think tank, was founded in 2009 and focused on issues of governance and human rights. One of its projects, the Integrity Initiative, aims to expose and counter Russian disinformation and influence operations in Europe. Most of the project's funding has come from the British Foreign Ministry, but

30 Robert S. Mueller, "Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election," *U.S. Department of Justice*, March 2019, https://www.justice.gov/storage/report.pdf (accessed 13 June 2020).

31 Scott Shane, "The Fake Americans Russia Created to Influence to Influence the Election," *New York Times*, 7 September 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/07/us/politics/russia-facebook-twitter-election.html (accessed 13 June 2020).

32 Simon Johnson and Olof Swahnberg, "Swedish Sports Body Says Anti-Doping Unit Hit by Hacking Attack," *Reuters,* 15 May 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sweden-doping/swedish-sports-body-says-anti-doping-unit-hit-by-hacking-attack-idUSKCN1IG2GN (accessed 13 June 2020); "WADA Confirms Another Batch of Athlete Data Leaked by Russian Cyber Hackers 'Fancy Bear'," *WADA*, 14 September 2016, https://www.wada-ama.org/en/media/news/2016-09/wada-confirms-another-batch-of-athlete-data-leaked-by-russian-cyber-hackers-fancy (accessed 2 May 2019).

33 The screenshots are in the author's possession.

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the agency has also received support from NATO, Facebook, and the British Ministry of Defence. The latter, for instance, supported a project that promoted the image of the military among British youth from disadvantaged communities.[34]

The central narratives conveyed by Russian state media included claims that the Integrity Initiative project was part of the British security agency's pan-European network whose objective was to influence political developments in other countries and to promote primarily anti-Russian policies at the EU level. However, there were other claims promoted by Russian media outlets.[35]

Articles published on 23 November 2018, for instance, alleged that the Integrity Initiative financed the activities of the well-known Kremlin critic Bill Browder, CEO for the investment company Hermitage Capital, and Russian politicians, such as the opposition leader Aleksei Navalnyi. The texts contained no facts, evidence, or references that would support these claims.[36] Yet, the Russian media quoted the chairman of the Russian Federation Council's Foreign Affairs Committee Konstantin Kosachev who stated that the information would be investigated by Russian authorities: "Undoubtedly, this information calls for close attention and a thorough investigation … I consider it to be of fundamental importance that we focus on gathering evidence, but not in haste, no matter how

34 See Peter Walker, "Foreign Office Investigates Reports that State-funded Body Targeted Corbyn," *The Guardian*, 10 December 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/dec/10/foreign-office-investigates-report-state-funded-body-targeted-corbyn (accessed 2 May 2019); see also the British government's reply to a written question in Parliament in Tobias Ellwood, "Ministry of Defence: Institute for Statecraft: Written Question—200608," *UK Parliament,* 12 December 2018, https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-12-10/200608/ (accessed 12 June 2019).

35 Umer Jamshaid, "Anonymous Finds Russia's Navalny's Associate, Browder Among UK Intelligence's Clients" *Sputnik/Urdupoint*, 23 November 2018, https://www.urdupoint.com/en/world/anonymous-finds-russias-navalnys-associate-488098.html (accessed 12 June 2020); Sumaira FH [Hussain], "Russian Lawmakers Consider Next Steps After Hackers Leak UK Covert Op Files," *Sputnik/Urdu Point*, 24 November 2018, https://www.urdupoint.com/en/world/russian-lawmakers-consider-next-steps-after-h-488213.html (accessed 12 June 2020).

36 Jamshaid, "Anonymous Finds Russia's Navalny's Associate."

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tempting that might be."[37] Andrei Lugovoi, a deputy in the Russian Duma, a member of its security committee, and a former KGB officer, identified by British investigators as the one who was responsible for the murder of Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006, suggested that British information warfare was part of the British covert action designed to discredit Russia in the eyes of Western media.[38] The revelation about the Integrity Initiative was also used as an argument for Russia taking countermeasures. Yurii Shvytkin, deputy chairman of the Duma's Defence Committee, argued: "We should think about creating a special unit that will deal with countering cyberattacks now that the West is using a new level of technology against our country, while blaming us for attacks."[39]

The campaign against the Integrity Initiative should be contextualized by Russia's political realignment under Putin. Russian state media is the leading source of information for the Russian public. According to the government's official security doctrine, both the domestic and the international information domains are central to security policy. According to Vera Tolz and Yuri Teper, the media plays a central role in authoritarian systems, such as the one in Russia.[40] The state media channels are strictly regimented and are obliged to follow general guidelines issued by the Kremlin administration; they must promote the popularity of the regime and reaffirm its legitimacy; and they are certainly expected to communicate the regime's political priorities and ideological orientation to broader audiences.[41] Russia's international media platforms,

37 "Kosachev prizval rassledovat dannyie o deistviiakh britanskikh sluzhb," *RIA Novosti*, 23 November 2018, https://ria.ru/20181123/1533411658.html (accessed 12 June 2020).

38 "Lugovoi: Britania pytaetsia diskreditirovat Rossiiu," *Vesti.ru*, 23 November 2018, https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=3086962 (accessed 12 June 2020). Lugovoi was among the Duma deputies who proposed the January 2019 bill that would impose state restrictions on the Internet access in the Russian Federation. See Leonid Kovachich, "Russia Flirts with Internet Sovereignty," *The Moscow Times*, 1 February 2019, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/02/01/russia-flirts-with-internet-sovereignty-op-ed-a64369 (accessed 12 June 2020).

39 Sumaira FH [Hussain], "Russian Lawmakers Consider Next Steps."

40 Vera Tolz and Yuri Teper, "Broadcasting Agitainment: A New Media Strategy of Putin's Third Presidency," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 34, no. 4 (2018): 213–27.

41 Scott Gehlbach, "Reflections on Putin and the Media," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2016): 77–87.

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such as RT and Sputnik, reflect its key foreign policy objective—to promote Russian interests domestically and abroad.[42]

As mentioned earlier, Russian state media have been linked to fake social media accounts: in January 2018, Facebook shut down 289 pages and 75 accounts that had been created by Sputnik in a manner that made them appear deceptively authentic and independent.[43] Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that the campaign against the Integrity Initiative was politically motivated, and that unverified claims by Russian state media should be handled with the requisite care.

The 62 articles about the Integrity Initiative published in various European languages on the same day suggest that they were part of a well-prepared operation. The leaks had appeared on November 5, and the following two weeks seemed to be a period required for producing and finally publishing a large number of articles that appeared simultaneously on 23 November. An avalanche of texts containing a similar message initiated the aforementioned information cascade. The prevalent narrative about the Integrity Initiative, an allegedly front organization for the British military intelligence with an anti-Russian agenda, continued to be one of the central components of Russian media campaigns that lasted until February 2019. After this month, the intensity of these campaigns finally decreased.

Sputnik and RT claimed that the "leaked documents" revealed several sensational "facts." Among them were the Integrity Initiative's plan to place mines around Sevastopol in March 2014 to prevent Crimea's "reunification" with Russia, the Initiative's possible involvement in an attempted murder of the former GRU case officer

42 Sarah Oates, "Kompromat Goes Global?: Assessing a Russian Media Tool in the United States," *Slavic Review* 76, no. S1 (August 2017): S57–S65; Miranda Lupion, "The Gray War of Our Time: Information Warfare and the Kremlin's Weaponization of Russian-Language Digital News," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 31, no. 3 (2018): 329–53.

43 "Facebook Removes Hundreds of 'Fake' Accounts Linked to Russia," *Financial Times*, 17 January 2019, https://www.ft.com/content/e372c90a-1a44-11e9-9e64-d150b3105d21 (accessed 14 June 2020).

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Sergei Skripal in Salisbury in the spring of 2018; and the British government's hybrid warfare against Russia, directed by MI5.[44] The most fanciful scenario alleged that the Integrity Initiative played a significant role in preparing Great Britain for a nuclear war against Russia.[45]

Using the Factiva analysis programme, it is possible to generate statistics for the entire newsfeed around the campaign against the Integrity Initiative. Figure 1 shows how the campaign grew during the autumn of 2018, finally receding by February 2019. In November 2018, 213 articles were published, followed by 188 articles in December 2018, 199 articles in January 2019, and 27 in February 2019—627 articles in total. If irrelevant articles and news outlets that published fewer than four articles on the topic are excluded, 528 articles published in 22 different news outlets remain.[46] Of the total 528 articles, 472 (or 89.3 percent) were published by 17 different Russian state media outlets (see Table 2 for an overview). The largest was *Sputnik* International (in English) that published a total of 180 articles, followed by the Russian-language *RIA Novosti* (134 articles), German *Sputnik* (32 articles), *ITAR-TASS* (18 articles), *Vesti* (17 articles), and French *Sputnik* (14 articles). The *BBC* published 20 articles, but of these 18 appeared in the section entitled "Monitoring

44 "Anonymous Hackers Expose UK Plans to Mine Sevastopol Days Before Crimea Vote," *Sputnik,* 15 December 2018, https://sputniknews.com/russia/201812151070711875-hacker-anonymous-russia-mines/ (accessed 12 June 2020); Kit Klarenberg, "Shock Files: What Role Did Integrity Initiative Play in Sergei Skripal Affair?," *Sputnik,* 4 January 2019, https://sputniknews.com/europe/201901041071225427-skripal-integrity-initiative-miller/ (accessed 12 June 2020); Kit Klarenberg, "Integrity Initiative: Foreign Office Funded, Staffed by Spies, Housed by MI5?," *Sputnik,* 13 December 2018, https://sputniknews.com/analysis/201812131070655802-integrity-initiative-intelligence-disinformation/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

45 "New Integrity Initiative Leak: Make Muslims Love NATO, Target Anti-Frackers, Plan for Nuclear War," *RT,* 26 January 2019, https://www.rt.com/news/449848-integrity-initiative-muslims-nato-nuclear/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

46 As an example of irrelevant publications, African news media published a number of articles about Ghana's anti-corruption program bearing the name "Integrity Initiative." Several Russian media outlets have also been excluded, such as the Azeri, Chinese, and Polish editions of Sputnik, because the number of articles they published on the topic was fewer than four.

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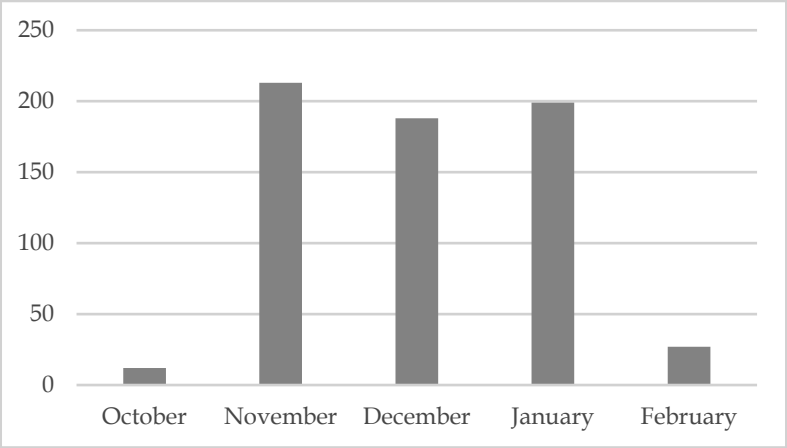
the Former Soviet Union" that documents Russian media's reporting on Great Britain. Some of the articles produced by Sputnik International appeared only in syndicated media, such as the Pakistani *Urdu Point*. Articles published by *RT* are categorized as "web news," rather than "publications," in Factiva's search function, and therefore these are not included in the statistics. The omission of certain Russian media sources presents a source-critical problem. If *RT* were to be included, the total number of articles published by Russian state media would be greater than 472, which means that the proportion of articles published in Russian media is also greater than 89.3 percent.

Figure 1. Mentions of the Integrity Initiative in International Media, October 2018–February 2019



Source: Factiva, author's own calculations

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Table 2. News Outlets Covering the Integrity Initiative, November 2018–February 2019

Publication	Origin	Number of Articles
Sputnik News	Russian	180
RIA Novosti	Russian	134
Sputnik (Germany)	Russian	32
BBC	British	2(20)
ITAR TASS	Russian	18
Vesti	Russian	17
Sputnik (France)	Russian	14
CIS and Baltic Countries News	Russian	13
The Times	British	13
RBC	Russian	11
Sunday Mail	British	10
REGNUM News Agency	Russian	9
Rossiiskaia Gazeta	Russian	9
Daily Record	British	8
TV First Channel	Russian	7
Rosbalt News Agency	Russian	5
Sputnik (China, simplified)	Russian	5
Sputnik (China, traditional)	Russian	5
ANSA	Italian	5
TV TVC	Russian	5
AIF Online	Russian	4
Day.az	Russian	4
Total		528

Source: Factiva, author's own calculations

Similar to the aforementioned media analysis, the results of a quantitative analysis (conducted by using a scraper and Twitter API) of Twitter activity during the period from 1 November 2018 to 30 March 2019 indicate that the campaign quickly escalated and eventually decreased. This is the type of pattern we should expect while observing an information cascade. After all available leaks had been

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exhausted and the influence effect had been achieved, causing reputational damage to the Integrity Initiative and the British government, the campaign decreased.

This analysis has been conducted in two parts. First, data from eight English-language media outlets were selected (*BBC World*, *The Independent*, *The Daily Mail*, *RIA Novosti*, *RT*, *Sputnik*, *The Sun*, and *The Telegraph*). Of these, only *RT* (23 times) and *Sputnik* (24 times) mentioned the Integrity Initiative in Twitter posts (as either Integrity Initiative or #integrityinitiative) during the selected time period. In both parts of the analysis, the statistical tool R was used.

The results of the frequency analysis are as follows: from 5 November 2018, when the first post appeared, to 28 February 2019, a total of 21,059 posts were made on Twitter about the Integrity Initiative, with several distinct peaks in early December and January. Some of these peaks coincided with the publication of new documents on www.cyberguerilla.com on 5 November 2018 (part 1), 29 November 2018 (part 2), and 13 December 2018 (part 3). The greatest peak occurred on 5 January 2019 with 819 posts which corresponded to the publication of "part 4" of the hacked documents on the previous day.[47] Using the same method, we can also analyze the occurrence of keywords on Twitter, showing that the most frequently used words in connection with the posts about the Integrity Initiative were "propaganda," "British," "war," "Russia," "anti-Russian," "RT.com," "disinformation," "Corbyn," and "covert," which suggests the nature of the reports' content in Russian state media.[48] In other words, the main narratives that were promoted by Russian state media were consistent with those on social media.

47 See "Operation 'Integrity Initiative.' British Information War Against All," parts 2–4, *Aeternusmalus.wordpress.com*, 18 December 2018, https://aeternusmalus.wordpress.com/2018/12/18/operation-integrity-initiative-british-informational-war-against-all-part-2-cyberguerrilla-soapbox/ (accessed 12 June 2020). Some of the original links no longer work.

48 We have excluded words, such as "https," "news," "media," and "12" from this list, which occur as frequently as the words offered above.

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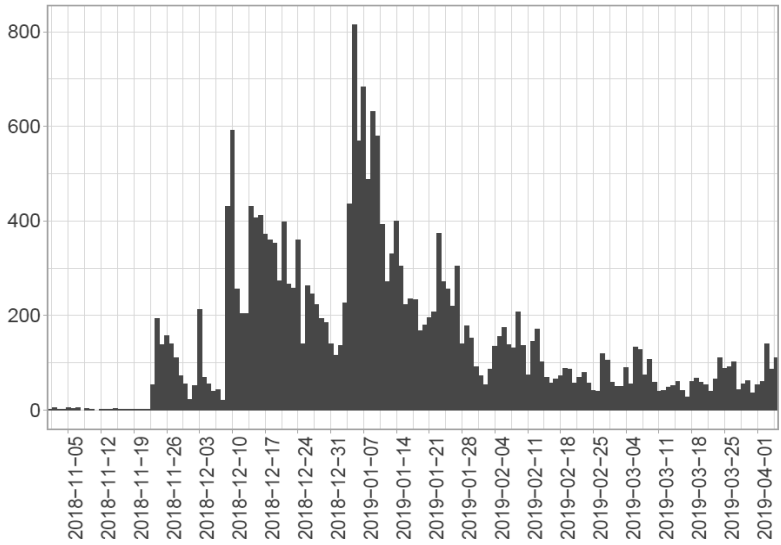
Figure 2. Twitter Mentions of the Integrity Initiative, November 2018–March 2019



Source: The analysis was conducted using a scraper and Twitter API

The "Secret Network" of the Integrity Initiative

The focal point of the Russian state-run reports about the Integrity Initiative was the claim that the project administered a "covert" network of pan-European "clusters"—allegedly secret networks operating all over Europe.[49] These so-called clusters were accorded a key role in the reporting; the documents that had been hacked and leaked through cyberguerilla.org contained lists of clusters where

49 "In Her Majesty's Service: How UK Reportedly Pushes Anti-Russian Propaganda in EU," *RT*, 27 November 2018, https://www.rt.com/news/445004-integrity-initiative-propaganda-russia/ (accessed 12 June 2020); "Integrity Initiative's Anti-Russia Crusaders Spread 'the Very Definition of Propaganda'," *RT,* 11 January 2019, https://www.rt.com/news/448582-integrity-initiative-propaganda-russia-uk/ (accessed 12 June 2020); "V Britanii nadeiutsia na borbu BBC s vliianiiem v Rossii, zaiavili v Anonymous," *RIA Novosti,* 2 February 2019, https://ria.ru/20190211/1550704325.html (accessed 12 June 2020); "Khakery vylozhili dannyie o sushchestvovanii v ES podrazdeleniia po dezinformatsii," *RIA Novosti,* 5 January 2019, https://ria.ru/20190105/1549043592.html (accessed 12 June 2020).

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the names of dozens of journalists, academics, diplomats, and politicians were included. The lists, which had previously been internal working documents of the IfS, included their names and email addresses but no information about either their employment, collaborative work, or funding. The people included in the lists had similar backgrounds. More specifically, they worked on issues related to security and/or Russia. The existence of the alleged "clusters" was used in the Russian media campaigns as a concrete example of how the British government used covert front organizations to promote anti-Russian policies.

However, using the hacked documents alone, it was impossible to establish an explicit connection between the individuals listed in them and the IfS, or between the IfS and the British military. The interpretation of the alleged connection was concocted by the hackers, working under the name Anonymous, and by Russian state media to shape the broader audiences' perception about the significance of these documents. A discussion that followed in the media revealed that some individuals who appeared in the "cluster lists" had had contact with the IfS as invited speakers or the authors of reports, while others were unaware of the IfS's existence. In addition, there was a third category of people in the lists who had been contacted by the IfS but declined the offer to cooperate with it.

Furthermore, the IfS was criticised in the British media, but this criticism concerned the question of how the IfS's official Twitter account had communicated on issues related to domestic policy. The other type of criticism was associated with the insufficient transparency of the IfS's website regarding its funding sources and actual cooperation partners, although this information had never been secret.[50] To summarize, the hacked documents did not support in any shape or form the claims about a secret British military

50 James Ball, "When Free Societies Copy Russian Media Tactics, There's Only One Winner," *The Guardian*, 9 January 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/09/free-societies-russia-misinformation-integrity-initiative (accessed 12 June 2020); Mark Galeotti, "The Integrity Initiative and Me (and Jeremy Corbyn)," *In Moscow's Shadows,* 19 December 2018, https://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/2018/12/19/the-integrity-initiative-and-me-and-jeremy-corbyn/ (accessed 12 June 2020). See also critical comments about

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front organization initiated in the Russian media. Interestingly, as we will see in the next section, this did not seem to matter for the actors who eventually contributed to the diffusion of the campaign in the local Swedish media environment.

The Swedish Dimension of the Operation

One of the leaked documents claimed that Martin Kragh was the director of the Integrity Initiative's so called "Nordic cluster," one of the many different "clusters" that appear in the Integrity Initiative documents. At the time, Kragh was head of the Russia and Eurasia Programme at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs in Stockholm and researcher at the Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Uppsala University. There was no evidence that Kragh worked for the IfS's Integrity Initiative project, and he himself denied any affiliation with it.[51] Several other people listed in the same document, such as the researcher Tor Bukkvoll at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, have stated that they have never been involved with the British think tank.[52] Furthermore, among the hacked documents were at least four contradictory versions concerning Sweden, and in addition to the "Nordic cluster," a "Swedish cluster" was described as "not yet established" in another document, which did not contain Kragh's name. A third document identified an unnamed Swedish individual, possibly based at the Swedish Defence Research Agency, as a noteworthy collaborator of

the IfS by Aric Toler, an analyst with Bellingcat, on Twitter, 23 November, 2018: https://twitter.com/AricToler/status/1066004287271198720.

51 See Mathias Sthåle, "Så blev ryska medier del av ett ryskt informationskrig," *Svenska Dagbladet*, 16 February 2019, https://www.svd.se/sa-blev-svenska-medier-en-del-i-ryskt-informationskrig (accessed 12 June 2020). See also Martin Kragh's comment on Twitter, 28 January 2019: https://twitter.com/MartinKragh1/status/1089974706005032962.

52 Thomas Vermes, "Integrity Initiative: Norske navn trukket inn i hemmelig nettverk for informasjonskrig mot Russland," *ABC Nyheter*, 2 January 2019, https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2019/01/02/195488180/norske-navn-trukket-inn-i-hemmelig-nettverk-for-informasjonskrig-mot-russland (accessed 12 June 2020).

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the Integrity Initiative, while a fourth document named three researchers at the Swedish Defence University and a politician who died in 2017 as the project's Swedish contact people.[53]

This section analyzes how the Russian-led media campaign that had been initiated through a hack-and-leak operation against the Integrity Initiative was also taken up by journalists and activists in the Swedish information sphere. It is of particular interest to map the actors who contributed to the informational cascade before it was picked up by *Aftonbladet*. To isolate relevant explanatory variables, it seems reasonable to apply the concept of argumentative patterns which helps identify a particular constellation of arguments that, when taken together into consideration, generate a specific structure of rhetorical elements capable of shaping a certain perception or opinion.[54] The argumentative patterns of interest here are comprised of texts with unique and recurring argumentative and rhetorical elements that: a) explicitly link Kragh to the Integrity Initiative, and b) on the basis of this link, assert a direct or indirect connection between Kragh and the British state and/or the British military intelligence service. Promoted by Russian state media, these argumentative patterns were followed and disseminated by actors in the Swedish environment. The section analyzes who these various actors were, and what links may have existed between them.[55]

53 Documents and screenshots are in the author's possession. Some previous links to documents from the Integrity Initiative have ceased to function, but they are reproduced in second-hand sources, such as South Front (2018), a website that has been linked to Russian intelligence agencies. See Aro, "The Cyberspace War." See also web sharing sites: https://www.pdf-archive.com/2018/11/02/clusterroundupjul18/clusterroundupjul18.pdf and https://www.pdf-archive.com/2018/11/02/xcountry/xcountry.pdf; https://geopolitics.co/2018/11/23/integrity-initiative-exposed-as-uk-special-ops-vs-eu-countries/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

54 Frans van Eemeren, "Identifying Argumentative Patterns: A Vital Step in the Development of Pragma-Dialectics," *Argumentation* 30, no. 1 (2016): 15.

55 This method has similarities with the process tracing method. See James Mahoney, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation," *Security Studies* 24, no. 2 (2015): 200–18; Sharon Crasnow, "Process Tracing in Political Science: What's the Story?," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science,* no. 62 (2017): 6–13; Andrew Bennet and Jeffrey Checkel, *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

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Political activists associated with a Swedish-based NGO known as Swedish Doctors for Human Rights (SWEDHR) constituted the first group of actors to link Kragh to the Integrity Initiative. Being on the far left, they received international attention in 2015 for their defence of the Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad.[56] Their reports that repeatedly denied that the Syrian regime was responsible for the use of chemical weapons against its opponents have been frequently cited in Russian state media, as well as by Russian and Syrian diplomats in the U.N. Security Council. The SWEDHR members had no documented expertise in the field of chemical weapons, and their conclusions were challenged by the investigations conducted by the U.N. and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).[57] On 27 November 2018, Sputnik interviewed one of the SWEDHR's figureheads, Marcello Ferrada de Noli, who discussed an apparent integration of the Nordic countries into British intelligence.[58] Other SWEDHR members subsequently helped spread further posts about Kragh, primarily through their various websites and social media.[59] In May 2019, Ferrada de Noli told the Russian newspaper *Izvestiia* that Kragh's work

56 Mattias Carlsson and Mikael Delin, "Gasattacker förnekas med hjälp från svensk läkargrupp," *Dagens Nyheter*, 22 April 2017, https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/gasattacker-fornekas-med-hjalp-fran-svensk-lakargrupp (accessed 12 June 2020).

57 Katia Patin, "Russia Used a Two-Year-Old Video and an 'Alternative' Swedish Group to Discredit Reports of Syria Gas Attack," *Coda Story,* 2 May 2017, https://codastory.com/disinformation/armed-conflict/a-swedish-alternative-ngo-disputes-a-video-of-syrian-carnage-and-a-russian-fake-news-meme-is-born/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

58 Umer Jamshaid, "UK's Integrity Initiative Revelation May Lead to Improvement of Russia-EU Relations—NGO." *Sputnik/Urdu Point,* 27 November 2018, https://www.urdupoint.com/en/world/uks-integrity-initiative-revelation-may-lead-490074.html (accessed 14 June 2020); "How UK's Integrity [disinformation] Initiative backfires?," *Indicter*, 27 November 2018, http://theindicter.com/how-uks-integrity-disinformation-initiative-backfires/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

59 Patrik Oksanen, "Oksanen: Cyberstölden, förtalskampanjen och kulturchefen som tappar fattningen," *Hela Hälsingland,* 12 February 2019, https://www.helahalsingland.se/artikel/ledare-centerpartistisk/oksanen-cyberstolden-fortalskampanjen-och-kulturchefen-som-tappar-fattningen (accessed 12 June 2020).

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was part of a larger British project that involved "torture and executions" in various countries.[60]

The British media also became the platform for an international network of academics and activists, known as the Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media (SPM), supporters of al-Assad and the Russian campaign in Syria.[61] The SPM published a lengthy analysis of the Integrity Initiative's activities, linking them to the British military and an anti-Russian agenda.[62] One SPM member, a professor at Sydney University, was suspended for "serious misconduct" after sharing with his students an image of the Israeli flag overlayered with a swastika.[63] In 2018 and 2019, the researcher and a Swedish member of the SPM Greg Simons at Uppsala University shared on social media information that alleged a connection between his colleague Martin Kragh and the Integrity Initiative.[64] Simons's research focuses on propaganda and public diplomacy, but on a number of occasions he participated as an expert commentator in Russian, Turkish, and Iranian state media

60 "UK Government Financing Torture and Executions," *Indicter*, 20 April 2019, https://theindicter.com/uk-government-financing-torture-and-executions-2/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

61 Georgie Keate, Dominic Kennedy, Krystina Shveda, and Deborah Haynes, "Apologists for Assad Working in British Universities," *Times,* 14 April 2018, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/apologists-for-assad-working-in-british-universities-2f72hw29m (accessed 12 June 2020); James Landale, "Russia-Linked Hack 'Bid to Discredit' UK Anti-Disinformation Campaign—Foreign Office," *BBC,* 10 December 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-46509956 (accessed 12 June 2020); Olivia Solon, "How Syria's White Helmets Became Victims of an Online Propaganda Machine," *The Guardian*, 18 December 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/18/syria-white-helmets-conspiracy-theories (accessed 12 June 2020).

62 The article is a living document which has been updated several times. See Paul McKeigue, David Miller, Jake Mason, and Piers Robinson, "Briefing Note on the Integrity Initiative," *Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media*, 21 December 2018, http://syriapropagandamedia.org/working-papers/briefing-note-on-the-integrity-initiative (accessed 12 June 2020).

63 Michael Koziol, "Sydney University Moves to Sack Notorious Lecturer After Nazi Swastika Incident," *Sydney Morning Herald,* 5 December 2018, https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/sydney-university-moves-to-sack-notorious-lecturer-after-nazi-swastika-incident-20181205-p50k97.html (accessed 12 June 2020).

64 Greg Simons, *Twitter*, 28 November 2019, https://twitter.com/GregSimons12/status/1068022707546177536 (accessed 12 June 2020); and 7 February 2019, https://twitter.com/GregSimons12/status/1093465818195726336.

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where he once identified the British authorities' explanation about attempted murder of the former Russian intelligence officer Sergei Skripal in the spring of 2018 as a "bizarre" case of anti-Russian propaganda.[65]

On 19 December 2018, the Swedish Trotskyist Socialist Party's organ, *Internationalen*, published an article entitled "British Troll Mill with a Swedish Connection" that included the name and photo of Martin Kragh and linked him to the British military intelligence service.[66] The *Internationalen* repeated its accusations in another article published on 18 January, 2019.[67] This article made a reference to an opinion piece published in the newspaper *Dagens Arena*, accusing Kragh of participating in an "anonymous group" that, through a "McCarthyesque campaign," sought to silence the Swedish environmental and peace movement.[68] Among the signatories of this text was the former leader of the Green Party Per Gahrton. Similar to other publications, this one included no evidence to support the allegations.[69] Notably, in the summer of 2014, another co-

65 "Russian President Denounces 'Ungrounded Accusations' After UK Nerve Agent Incidents," *Press-TV*, 17 July 2018, https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/07/17/568402/Russia-Putin-Novichok-poisoning-UK-Amesbury-Skripal (accessed 12 June 2020); Greg Simons, "Mainstream Media: The Indispensable Pre-War Preparations," *Sputnik,* 8 April 2017, https://sputniknews.com/analysis/201704081052442109-mainstream-media-syria-war-preparations/ (accessed 12 June 2020); Patrik Oksanen, *Skarpa skärvor. Om hur informationskrig hotar att slå sönder det öppna samhället* (Stockholm: Bertil Ohlin förlag, 2018), 103–04.

66 "Brittisk trollkvarn med svensk anknytning," *Internationalen,* 19 December 2018, http://www.internationalen.se/2018/12/brittisk-trollkvarn-med-svensk-anknytning/.http://www.internationalen.se/2018/12/brittisk-trollkvarn-med-svensk-anknytning/. This article was later removed from this website. A copy of this text is in the author's possession.

67 "Skrämselpropaganda från NATOs trojanska hästar," *Internationalen,* 18 January 2019, http://www.internationalen.se/2019/01/skramselpropagandan-fran-natos-trojanska-hastar/). This article was later removed from this website. A copy of this text is in the author's possession.

68 Tord Björk Ellie Cijvat, Per Gahrton, Eddie Olsson, Hans Sternlycke, Bo Sundbäck, and Hans Wåhlberg, "Rena McCarthykampanjen mot MP och fredsrörelsen," *Dagens Arena*, 10 January 2019, http://www.dagensarena.se/opinion/rena-maccarthykampanjen-mot-mp-och-fredsrorelsen/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

69 On Facebook, Per Gahrton accused Martin Kragh of being a "tool of powers who claimed that Russia was planning a military attack on Sweden" (19 March

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author of the *Dagens Arena* article, Tord Björk, defended Novorossiia, a historical term appropriated by Russian nationalists advocating at that time Russia's annexation of the eastern and southeastern parts of Ukraine. Moreover, Björk also participated in the notorious Moscow-controlled Yalta conference in occupied Crimea, a forum that explicitly supported the Novorossiia project and the annexation of Crimea.[70]

Articles containing similar argumentative patterns were simultaneously disseminated by actors who were associated with populist right or far-right political movements. One such article was published on 22 December 2018 by the newspaper *Skånska Dagbladet*, in which a businessman, formerly affiliated with the Sweden Democrats' purged Youth Organization (SDU) and now working for the Russian nuclear energy monopoly Rosatom, accused Kragh of trying to "influence the Swedish politics through an anonymous front organization!" and "the British Foreign Ministry."[71] Like other publications, this article contained no evidence

2019), and further suggested that Kragh's work had been motivated by the desire to support the "military-industrial complex" (8 April 2019). Gahrton presented no evidence for his claims.

70 Daria Mitina, "Obsudili v Yalte khod stroitelstva Novorossii," *Echo Moskvy*, 2 September 2014, https://echo.msk.ru/blog/mitina_daria/1392116-echo/ (accessed 12 June 2020). In a post at the discussion forum Labournet Austria that was later deleted at the behest of the author, Tord Björk wrote (text quoted verbatim with misspellings intact): "According to well informed journalist Per Leander who visited Ukraine together with Alexey Sakhnin and have done excellent work in Main stream media critizing the Kiev government has three members on Borotba been kidnapped by Vostok Battalion risking to be exchanged with prisoners taken by the Kiev government. … Furthermore it is to be acknowledged as an act directed against the Yalta declaration and the Yalta meeting, Sakhnin was present in Yalta at the meeting. I would like to have very fast response from our Russian friends on this … I will if I do not get any reaction soon make an international appeal to all movements in the social forum modem, end if I do not get response quickly although I know this would be a great negative effect on the international trust for Novorossija." See Tord Björk, "Alarm Borotba Members Kidnapped by Pro-Russian Vostok Risking to Left to Kiev," *Labournet Austria*. This specific post was later deleted and removed from the archive of the website. A screenshot of the text is in the author's possession. For articles penned by Tord Björk, see http://www.labournetaustria.at/?s=Tord+Bjork.

71 Carl Meurling, "Sveriges Rysslandspolitik styrs utifrån," *Skånska Dagbladet*, 21 December 2018, https://www.skd.se/2018/12/21/sveriges-rysslandspolitik-styrs-utifran (accessed 12 June 2020).

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whatsoever that would support any of the author's claims. Quite symptomatically, however, at the time of publication, the author was chief executive officer of a Russian-owned company that had won large contracts in Russia. Shortly before the British Brexit referendum, the chairperson of this company's board donated £400,000 to the conservative Tory Party. This action was called into question in 2016 by several British members of parliament, and was identified as problematic with respect to security policy.[72]

Furthermore, on 21 January 2019, the campaign was picked up by an online newspaper founded by Kent Ekeroth, a former member of parliament who represented the Sweden Democrats. The article, published under the pseudonym Egor Putilov, claimed that Martin Kragh was part of a British organization which carried out "coordinated operations and campaigns in EU countries […] in order to depose undesirable politicians and civil servants through smear campaigns in the media."[73] The tone hardened in the new 22 February 2019 article by Putilov, in which he identified Kragh as a foreign spy who is "allowed to brand investigative journalists and opinion formers as foreign agents."[74] Putilov further argued that it would not be an exaggeration to label Kragh a "fascist" because he represented a threat to democracy. Like many other authors, Putilov offered no evidence for his allegations.[75]

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72 Holly Watt, "Luxembourg-Based Businessman Donated £400,000 to Tory Party," *The Guardian*, 25 August 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/aug/25/luxembourg-based-businessman-donated-400000-to-tory-party?CMP=share_btn_link (accessed 12 June 2020).

73 Egor Putilov, "MSBs interna mejl avslöjar: myndigheten förbereder antidemokratisk kupp," *Samhällsnytt*, 24 January 2019, https://samnytt.se/msbs-interna-mejl-avslojar-myndigheten-forbereder-antidemokratisk-kupp/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

74 Egor Putilov, "Om fascister," *Samhällsnytt,* 22 February 2019, https://samnytt.se/om-fascister/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

75 Some explanation is required concerning the individual behind the pseudonym Putilov. This person used several different identities during his time in Sweden. According to the newspaper *Arbetaren*, when he first arrived in Sweden in 2003, he sought asylum under the name Yuri Popov. His asylum application was denied in 2007, but using a new identity with a passport stating his age as four years younger, he was granted a Swedish residency permit on grounds other than asylum. He has since been registered under three different names: Alexander Yarovenko, Alexander Fridback, and Martin Dahlin. His place of birth in

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On 5 February 2019, two *Aftonbladet*-affiliated journalists, Johannes Wahlström and Alexei Sakhnin, published an article in *Novaya Gazeta*, identifying Kragh as part of the "English foreign policy's covert instruments," and as a "person who has […] covert contacts with an organization funded by a foreign power and conducts propaganda work in his own […] country."[76] According to the authors, Kragh attempted to influence the Swedish debate on security policy through "McCarthyism" and to silence critics of NATO. Wahlström and Sakhnin have both written for *Aftonbladet*'s culture section, and they have also freelanced for the Russian TV channel RT. Wahlström has served as WikiLeaks' Swedish representative, a job he attained through his father, Israel Shamir, a former Russian WikiLeaks representative with close ties to the Russian newspaper *Zavtra*, Russian neo-fascist circles, and their main ideologue Aleksandr Dugin.[77] In addition, Shamir repeatedly interacted on Facebook with the *Aftonbladet* contributors Wahlström and Sakhnin,

Russia was later changed from the city of Rybinsk of Yaroslavl oblast to Luxemburg to Dagestan. See Axel Green, "Egor Putilov avvisades från Sverige redan 2005—som 'Yuri Popov'," *Arbetaren*, 28 February 2018, https://www.arbetaren.se/2018/02/28/egor-putilov-avvisades-fran-sverige-redan-2005-som-yuri-popov (accessed 12 June 2020); Axel Green, "Egor Putilov lurade sig till svenskt medborgarskap," *Arbetaren,* 18 February 2018, https://www.arbetaren.se/2018/02/18/egor-putilov-lurade-sig-till-svenskt-medborgarskap (accessed 12 June 2020); Mattias Carlsson and Josefin Sköld, "Här är Egor Putilovs nya identitet," *Dagens Nyheter*, 1 March 2018, https://www.dn.se/nyheter/har-ar-egor-putilovs-nya-identitet (accessed 12 June 2020). For more information, see Emelie Rosén, Cleas Aronsson, and Daniel Öhman, "SD-tjänstemannen gjorde miljonvinst med rysk affärsman—'potentiell säkerhetsrisk', enligt experter," *Sveriges Radio*, 23 September 2016, https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=6522899 (accessed 12 June 2020); "Russian Shenanigans in Sweden: The Putative Mr Putilov," *Economist,* 7 April 2017; Fredrik Furtenbach, and Lova Olsson, "Putilov nekas ackreditering till riksdagen," *Sveriges Radio*, 25 April 2019, https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=7205950 (accessed 12 June 2020).

76 Alexei Sakhnin and Johannes Wahlström, "Vas zastaviat pomenyat svoio mneniie," *Novaya Gazeta*, 5 February 2019, https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2019/02/05/79440-vas-zastavyat-pomenyat-svoe-mnenie?fbclid=IwAR3grB4Z3iQHoW3x5kV7tpeuS6comfRQDskYf4VC09yVaGTOwuUAQA4Xc5Q (accessed 12 June 2020).

77 Alex Gibney, "Can We Trust Julian Assange and WikiLeaks?" *New York Times*, 8 August 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/08/opinion/can-we-trust-julian-assange-and-wikileaks.html (accessed 12 June 2020).

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and he commented on their article in *Novaya Gazeta* using the following words: "We live in a neo-Darwinian world in which some people survive, [and] others die. In the war over Russia, there cannot be any room for compromises […] Martin Kragh is the greatest enemy of Russia in Northern Europe, after Carl Bildt. Remember this name. After this publication, they will render him persona non grata in Russia." Undoubtedly, Shamir's post was "liked" by both Wahlström and Sakhnin.[78] On 15 February 2019 the Russian website "Colonel Cassad," one of Russia's most popular websites with strong ties to the Russian far-right and anti-Ukraine movement, published a post defending the article in *Novaya Gazeta* and repeating the allegations that Kragh was part of a NATO-led movement to undermine freedom of expression in Sweden.[79]

On 7 February 2019, two days after the article in *Novaya Gazeta* was published, the argumentative pattern concerning the Integrity Initiative was repeated for the first time in an established Swedish news publication—*Aftonbladet*. According to its culture section editor, Åsa Linderborg, Kragh indeed was a "political enemy" who "served the interests of foreign states." She further suggested that

78 "Här är Aftonbladet Kulturs 'goda' alternativ till Putin," *Expressen,* 24 January 2019, https://www.expressen.se/kultur/har-ar-aftonbladet-kulturs-goda-alternativ-till-putin/ (accessed 12 June 2020).

79 Colonel Cassad, "Kak 'Novaya Gazeta' priniala uchastiie v 'proputinskoi atake,'" *Livejournal,* 5 February 2019, https://colonelcassad.livejournal.com/4780653.html (accessed 12 June 2020). Sakhnin and Shamir have both been described as leading members of the Russian political organization the Left Front. See Olga Bychkova, "Osoboie mneniie," *Echo Moskvy,* 18 January 2018, https://echo.msk.ru/programs/personalno/2130808-echo (accessed 12 June 2020); on the Left Front's relation to the Yalta Conference in 2014, see Mitina, "Obsudili v Yalte khod stroitelstva Novorossii." In 2019 its leader Sergei Udaltsov appeared at a rally together with ultra-nationalist activists and politicians, such as Igor Girkin (Strelkov), the former separatist leader of the Ukrainian breakaway republic, the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR), who is suspected by the Dutch authorities as a culprit in the shooting down of the MH17 civilian airliner in July 2014. See "Udaltsov, Strelkov i Chaplin proveli v Moskve antiputinskii miting," *Radio Svoboda,* 17 March 2019, https://www.svoboda.org/a/29825997.html (accessed 12 June 2020); Natalya Dzhanpoladova and Robert Coalson, "I Don't Intend to Hide": Fresh from Prison, Russia's Udaltsov Rejoins Political Fray," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 24 August 2017, https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-opposition-bolotnaya-udaltsov-rejoins-political-fray/28695112.html (accessed 12 June 2020).

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because of his intelligence mission, he had to be investigated "by Swedish media and the security police."[80] Identical arguments appeared in the 12 February 2019 article, in which she argued that Kragh "sells (false) information about his fellow citizens."[81] A similar argumentative pattern appears in a third article by the same journalist from 21 February 2019 entitled "Martin Kragh is a Democratic Problem," which claimed that Kragh was responsible "for one of the most serious attacks on the freedom of press and speech in modern times."[82] *Aftonbladet* had never presented any evidence for the claim that Kragh sold false information about Swedish citizens to the British intelligence agency, other than the reference to the unverified source "Anonymous" and the aforementioned website www.cyberguerilla.com.

An analysis of the publications about the Integrity Initiative illustrates how a given argumentative pattern was transposed within the course of three months from the Russian state media to the Swedish information space, and ultimately to *Aftonbladet*. In this saga, there are three important elements that should be emphasized. First, several actors who at an early stage disseminated the claims about the Integrity Initiative and Kragh in Sweden have ties to Russian state media. For example, the role of "expert commentators" or freelance journalists in the process of local dissemination of disinformation, those who worked for Russian RT, was crucial. It would be reasonable to suggest that these actors learned about the Integrity Initiative through Russian media, further distorting the truth and escalating the hysteria around this institution. Second, there are clear horizontal connections that link Russian state media (RT), the actors in the Russian neo-fascist movement (Shamir), and *Aftonbladet* (Sakhnin and Wahlström). The interaction among those actors augmented the campaign, shaping it as an informational cascade. The third persisting element is the role played by actors in the far right and far left environments, who converge around certain "anti-establishment" themes, such as scepticism toward Western-

80 Linderborg, "Svenska medier måste hålla rent framför egen dörr."
81 Linderborg, "Karin Olssons utbrott döljer sakfrågan."
82 Linderborg. "Martin Kragh är ett demokratiskt problem."

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led institutions (EU and NATO), Western mainstream media, and sometimes democracy and human rights. Moreover, some of these actors openly declared their affinity with and membership in extremist political movements, a shared characteristic observed elsewhere in Europe.[83]

Finally, this study demonstrates that there is a persistent argumentative pattern that various publications exploited, featuring connections among the targets of media attacks. These targets were: the Integrity Initiative, the British military and/or security agency, and the researcher Kragh. Importantly, none of the claims associated with these targets' connections were supported by credible evidence. In fact, no evidence was offered to broader audiences who followed the story. Analyzed in their entirety, the hacked documents illuminate drastic contradictions and inconsistencies, a solid reason for questioning their legitimacy and an equally solid reason for doubts about the random involvement of the person or persons code-named Anonymous who disseminated the information through their account. The fact that the argumentative pattern that underpinned the false narrative was uncritically embraced by a significant portion of the audiences suggests that the Russian campaign was rather successful in shaping their perceptions. Simply put, the cumulative effect of informational cascades is a powerful mechanism that induces more and more people to accept and disseminate disinformation. All it takes is to expose them to a statement, gradually increasing its media visibility. Persistence of action transforms this statement into sensational news that goes viral, skewing people's views and numbing their faculties and abilities to think critically.

83 Stefano Braghiroli and Andrey Makarychev, "Russia and Its Supporters in Europe: Trans-Ideology *à la Carte*?," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 16, no. 2 (2016): 213–33; Marlene Laurelle, *Entangled Far Rights: A Russian-European Intellectual Romance in the Twentieth Century* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018).

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Conclusion

This case study of a Russian influence operation has investigated four interrelated questions: How and why was this international campaign against the IfS's Integrity Initiative Project launched? How was it linked to the Swedish information space? Which actors played an active role in disseminating the information in Sweden, as well as internationally? How successful was the campaign and why?

The evidence suggests that it was the Russian state media that established the image of the Integrity Initiative as an element of the British security services' secret network in Europe. With the support of social media, this information was carefully framed and further disseminated to shape people's perceptions and beliefs, locally and internationally. The manner by which the hacked documents were used resembles that of other known Russian campaigns. Contextual and empirical knowledge about Soviet/Russian active measures, together with the findings of this study, allow us to conclude, with a high degree of confidence, that the campaign against the IfS and Kragh is of Russian origin, having been conceived and implemented as part of an influence operation.

Schematically, this operation can be described as a process in which Russian state actors, in cooperation with hackers, conceived, planted, and disseminated a "signal." This initial stage was thoroughly monitored by the operator. The achievements of the latter phases seemed to be less predictable and more spontaneous. They depended on how efficient the influence operation was going to be in building the conditions for an informational cascade, drawing attention to a specific problem, setting an interpretative frame, and attempting to promote strategically selected information.

The operators appeared to rely on the spontaneity of specific actors' actions. As this study has shown, they played a central role in shaping the impact, success, and outcome of an influence operation on the national level. However, these processes having occurred on the national level seemed to be stochastic, following no particular pattern. A further careful scrutiny of similar cases is needed to better understand the motivations of the participants in

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such campaigns and their psychological and sociological profiles that might condition their social and political behavior. It is important, however, to highlight the three elements that made the Russian campaign under investigation successful: the willingness of the local actors to cooperate with the state media of a foreign country, in this case Russia; the extant horizontal links among the participating actors reinforced by shared ideology and views; and the actors' anti-establishment (or non-conformist) political affiliation. These elements were successfully exploited and manipulated by the operator. Most importantly, the fact that Russian disinformation was legitimized through its dissemination by the largest paper in the Nordics, *Aftonbladet*, illuminates the vulnerability of democratic societies and their susceptibility to foreign influence operations.

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The Trojan Media
Narrative Framing on Russian Television in the Occupied Donbas

Nataliia Kasianenko

> If you think that our television channels […] portray Ukraine in an unfavorable light, I agree with you […] If this is true, then it is wrong. We should not portray our neighbor, our closest neighbor and brotherly nation […] in an unfavorable light.[1]
>
> Vladimir Putin

The Euromaidan revolution of 2013–2014 has changed the course of Ukrainian politics. The protests have united people from all over the country in their plight to end corruption and bring the regime change in Kyiv.[2] In the aftermath of the revolution, Ukraine has decidedly turned away from Russia. The new security threats brought on by the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the Donbas conflict prompted Ukraine's post-Maidan government to promote patriotism and civic nationalism. The policies of de-Sovietization and Ukrainization initiated by President Poroshenko included stronger support for the Ukrainian language and a complete break with the Soviet past. The democratic developments in the neighboring state presented a real threat to the Russian authoritarian regime. To undermine democracy and create chaos in Ukraine, the Russian government has continued its support of the unrecognized "Donetsk People's Republic" (DNR) and the "Luhansk People's Republic" (LNR). The Kremlin has also ramped up its disinformation campaign to delegitimize Ukraine's post-Maidan government. The Russian state-controlled media labeled Ukraine's political elites as a

1 "Putin prizval SMI ne vystavliat Ukrainu v nevygodnom svete," *Ria Novosti*, 3 October 2019, https://ria.ru/20191003/1559414808.html (accessed 12 January 2020).

2 Yuriy Shveda and Joung Ho Park, "Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity: The Dynamics of Euromaidan," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 7, no. 1 (2016): 85–91.

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"fascist junta," and advanced the image of post-Maidan Ukraine as a country mired in chaos, violence, and anti-Russian xenophobia.[3]

In 2014, Ukrainian leaders imposed the first set of restrictions on the Russian media in Ukraine citing the attempt of Russian propaganda to manipulate public opinion in the country.[4] Over the next several years, the Ukrainian government has virtually banned all the sources of Russian television, radio, print, and social media in the country.[5] Now that the majority of Ukraine has moved outside of Moscow's orbit, the Russian leadership began to use mass media to advance a more limited goal to delegitimize the Ukrainian state in the occupied Donbas. Due to their physical occupation, Crimea and the "republics" in the Donbas remained under the influence of the Russian media. Russian elites have neither extended a promise of future integration to the "republics" nor have they recognized these entities as states.[6] The regime of Vladimir Putin benefits from the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine and is not interested in the successful reintegration of the DNR and LNR into Ukraine. To address its foreign policy objectives in Ukraine, state-controlled Russian media have been spreading disinformation and advancing a negative perspective on Ukraine's political and socio-economic situation since the Euromaidan protests.[7] This application of Russian "active measures" may be successful in alienating the residents of the "republics" from the rest of Ukraine.

Public opinion surveys in Ukraine after 2014 point to the growing levels of patriotism and a stronger sense of civic national

3 Sam Sokol, "Russian Disinformation Distorted Reality in Ukraine: Americans Should Take Note," *Foreign Policy*, 9 August 2019, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/08/02/russian-disinformation-distorted-reality-in-ukraine-americans-should-take-note-putin-mueller-elections-antisemitism/ (accessed 12 January 2020).

4 "Ukraina zaboronyla movlennya 14 rosiiskykh kanaliv," *Radio Svoboda*, 19 August 2014, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/26539960.html (accessed 14 January 2020).

5 Alec Luhn, "Ukraine Blocks Popular Social Networks as Part of Sanctions on Russia," *The Guardian*, 16 May 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/16/ukraine-blocks-popular-russian-websites-kremlin-role-war (accessed 13 January 2020).

6 Gwendolyn Sasse and Alice Lackner, "War and Identity: the Case of the Donbas in Ukraine," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 34, no. 2–3 (2018): 139–57.

7 Sokol, "Russian Disinformation Distorted Reality in Ukraine."

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identity across the country.[8] After the Euromaidan, the support for the Customs Union has declined in all regions of Ukraine, while the support for the European Union has increased substantially in the west and center. Ukrainians are also increasingly in favor of NATO membership in all regions of the country.[9] In the second round of Ukraine's 2019 presidential elections, Volodymyr Zelenskyi received 73% of votes to win against the incumbent President Petro Poroshenko. This electoral success was unprecedented in Ukraine's history as Zelenskyi was able to consolidate voter support from across regions and ethnocultural groups.[10] Yet, despite these election results, Ukraine's identity crisis has deepened after Euromaidan with regard to the Donbas region. Surveys indicate rising political alienation of the Donbas residents and a portion of the Russian-speaking Ukrainians living in the east and south of the country.[11] While language differences are less pronounced in Ukraine after the Euromaidan, divisions across other elements of identity are solidifying.[12]

In the fall of 2019, a representative survey was conducted in the occupied Donbas (the so-called ORDLO, a Ukrainian acronym for "certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions"). The survey results suggest that the prospects of reintegrating the occupied

8 Mikhail Alexseev, "War and Sociopolitical Identities in Ukraine," *Ponars Eurasia* (Policy Memo no. 392), October 2015, http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/war-and-sociopolitical-identities-ukraine (accessed 20 January 2020); Volodymyr Kulyk, "National Identity in Ukraine: Impact of Euromaidan and the War," *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 4 (2016): 588–608.

9 Mariia Zolkina and Olexiy Haran, "Changes in the Foreign Policy Orientations of Ukrainians after the Euromaidan: National and Regional Levels," in *Constructing a Political Nation: Changes in the Attitudes of Ukrainians during the War in the Donbas*, eds. Olexiy Haran and Maksym Yakovlyev (Kyiv: Stylos Publishing, 2017), 111–32; also available at https://dif.org.ua/uploads/pdf/1821273663 5aaf8ae4bfc014.12076744.pdf (accessed 13 January 2020).

10 "Vybory Prezydenta Ukrainy 2019," *Central Electoral Commission*, 21 April 2019, https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp2019/wp300pt001f01=720.html (accessed 24 January 2020).

11 Elise Giuliano, "Who Supported Separatism in Donbas? Ethnicity and Popular Opinion at the Start of the Ukraine Crisis," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 34, no. 2–3 (2018): 158–78.

12 Dominique Arel, "How Ukraine Has Become More Ukrainian," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 34, no. 2–3 (2018): 186–89.

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Donbas into Ukraine remain bleak. The majority of ORDLO residents (80.5%) did not want the "republics" to reunite with Ukraine.[13] The residents of ORDLO considered the Ukrainian government to be responsible for the Donbas conflict (84.5% of respondents) and continued to see Ukraine (14.3% of respondents) and "Ukraine's fascists" (23.6% of respondents) as the main enemy in the war. These perceptions may be linked to the sources of information used by ORDLO residents. Specifically, 57% of respondents claimed they followed Russian news on a daily basis, and only 5% said they followed Ukrainian news.[14]

Thus, the question of how the Russian government is using active measures in eastern Ukraine to shape public opinion is still as relevant today as it was in 2014. This chapter addresses the question of how the Russian state-controlled media shape and construct representations of the Ukrainian government and the "republics" in the Donbas, illuminating Russia's top-down efforts of public opinion manipulation in the occupied Donbas through disinformation. More specifically, this study examines the media content around one key event, the Normandy Four negotiations in December of 2019. Applying saliency theory seems appropriate here to highlight how the media content may be used instrumentally to enhance the importance of particular issues and concerns among the public in the occupied Donbas.[15] A discourse analysis focuses on two political television shows with the widest viewership in the "republics,"[16] *60 Minut* (60 Minutes) and *Vecher s Vladimirom Soloviovym* (Evening with Vladimir Soloviov; hereafter *Evening*), on the

13 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi v chastyni Donetskoi ta Luhanskoi oblastei, iaki tymchasovo ne znakhodiatsia pid kontrolem Ukrainy," *Ukrainian Institute for the Future*, 11 November 2019, https://www.uifuture.org/publications/reports/25175-ordlo/zvit/lystopad (accessed 24 January 2020), 36–38. There are always concerns about the validity and limitations of surveys conducted in the political regimes of this nature. These statistics have been approached critically, and cross-checked with other alternative sources of information available for researchers.

14 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 58.

15 It is possible that some or all of these concerns represent genuine attitudes of individuals residing in the occupied territories.

16 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 59.

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day of the Normandy Four summit in Paris. The findings are compared to the public opinion trends in the occupied Donbas as evidence of manipulation by the Russian media, which aims to enhance the saliency of key political and socio-economic concerns of the Donbas residents while presenting political events in a highly skewed manner. Overall, through its media, the Russian state is using disinformation as a tool in perpetuating the Donbas conflict.

Salient Concerns in the Donbas

There is a shortage of public opinion data out of the occupied Donbas, which complicates attempts at understanding political and socio-economic grievances in the region, particularly the sources of anti-Ukrainian attitudes. While this information is critical to strategizing short- and long-term solutions for the region, it is extremely difficult to obtain a representative sample and achieve data reliability in a conflict zone where people fear for their safety. Based on the limited public opinion data from the region, security, socio-economic welfare, and the future of the occupied territories are the core concerns of the ORDLO residents.

Security Concerns

Security concerns in the region are primarily tied to the ongoing war. Six years after the beginning of the conflict, public opinion data from the occupied Donbas highlight the effects of exposure of the Donbas's residents to the Russian media. Approximately 90% of respondents in the fall 2019 survey agreed that Russia did not initiate the war in the Donbas. When asked about responsibility for the conflict, an overwhelming majority of respondents blamed the post-Maidan government (96%), the Euromaidan protesters (86%), the Ukrainian government under Yanukovych (80%), the United States (79%), and the European Union (77%). The residents of ORDLO pointed to Ukraine (14.3% of respondents) and "Ukraine's fascists" (23.6% of respondents) as the main enemy in the Donbas

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war.[17] The term "fascists" was brought up by respondents in response to an open-ended question asking to identify the opposing sides in the Donbas conflict. A large percentage of the residents of the occupied Donbas (especially in the DNR, 69%) agreed that the rights of Russian language speakers were undermined in Ukraine.[18]

The image of the Ukrainian state as a source of insecurity and instability is further complicated by a complete lack of trust in Ukraine's politicians. Even Yurii Boiko, a pro-Russian member of Ukraine's Parliament and a leader of the opposition party "Opposition Platform—For Life" was not supported by the majority of respondents in the occupied Donbas. Almost 50% of respondents in the DNR liked him, while more than 62% of the LNR residents claimed they did not like him.[19] These findings highlight the level of political alienation of the residents of the "republics" from the rest of Ukraine, which may pose an additional challenge for any future plans to reintegrate the occupied Donbas.

Socio-Economic Concerns

Survey data show that the ORDLO residents are worried about the region's present and future economic situation. Concerns over unemployment in the occupied Donbas have been salient: 39% of respondents indicated unemployment was a problem, and 24% claimed that there were practically no jobs available. In describing individual motivations to leave the Donbas region, survey respondents mentioned the availability of stable jobs and the opportunity to rent or buy housing in Russia or Ukraine-controlled territories.[20]

Based on the fall 2019 survey, most people felt that their personal financial situation remained the same in the last 12 months. At the same time, more people felt their economic situation has worsened rather than improved in the last year. In the LNR, 30.5% of respondents claimed that their financial situation got worse and only 8.8% of respondents said that it had improved. An even

17 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 36.
18 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 33.
19 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 16–21.
20 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 30.

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greater share of respondents, 44%, felt that the economic situation in Ukraine-controlled territories had worsened. Most residents of the occupied Donbas also did not expect Ukraine's economy would improve in the year ahead. The hopes of future socio-economic improvements in the "republics" were primarily tied to the prospect of integrating the region into Russia. Conversely, most respondents associated future re-integration into Ukraine with declining local economic conditions.[21]

Concerns for the Future

Public opinion data indicate bleak prospects for reintegrating the occupied parts of the Donbas region into Ukraine. Thus, in the fall 2019 survey, 51% of respondents wished the "republics" to be integrated into Russia, 16% wanted them to gain independence, while 13.5% of respondents preferred the idea of a special status for the "republics" within Russia.[22] Another 13.5% of respondents showed support for the idea behind the Steinmeier Formula,[23] a special status of the Donbas within Ukraine. Only a mere 5% of respondents were in favor of reintegration with Ukraine.[24]

The attitudes of the Donbas residents could very much be linked to the information sources that they follow. According to the recent survey, 57% of residents in ORDLO followed Russian news on a daily basis, with only 5% of them following the Ukrainian news. The residents of the occupied Donbas named Rossiia 1 (43.4% of respondents), NTV (25.9%), and Rossiia 24 (19%) as their most watched channels. Interestingly, the respondents were also asked to list public figures who they most respected. Their leaders (of the DNR and LNR) did not make it into the top three priority list. Yet, President Putin (11.2% of respondents), and two Russian television

21 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 14.
22 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 36–38.
23 The Steinmeier Formula includes a series of ceasefire provisions. It would allow for elections to be held in the occupied Donbas under Ukrainian legislation and the supervision of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) even *before* Ukraine regains full control over the border between Russia and the Russian-occupied territories of the Donbas.
24 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 37.

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journalists and political show hosts of the *Evening* and the *60 Minutes* on Russia 1 channel, Vladimir Soloviov (9.1%) and Olga Skabeieva (6.7%), did.[25] Russia's government certainly helped alienate the Donbas residents from the rest of Ukraine by advancing anti-Ukraine rhetoric in television, print, and online media.[26] TV political talk shows, which are an inseparable part of Russian active measures, have helped win the battle for the hearts and minds of the Donbas residents, which complicate any future attempts to bring peace and stability to the region.

The Tactics of Media Manipulation

Governments around the world are using both overt and subtle tactics of media manipulation. The overt strategies involve the use of propaganda, fake news, and censorship. The subtle tactics include various forms of agenda-setting and framing. Agenda-setting is the selection of topics and issues for coverage in the media, while framing implies offering specific interpretations of selected topics.[27] Ultimately, a media frame is "a pattern of news coverage that structures and organizes the meaning of a topic over time."[28] Framing is often implemented using the language of bias, emotional personal stories, and fake information. While all media channels face the task of agenda-setting when deciding on the content of their programs, in nondemocratic states, media outlets often set the agenda based on the government tasks and priorities. The ability of a regime to select certain topics, enhance their salience, present them in a way that would be beneficial to the regime (while completely ignoring

25 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 50–59.

26 Julia Sweet, "Political Invasions into Collective Memories: Russia," *International Journal of Communication*, no. 10 (2016): 4512–531; also available at https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/4406/1781 (accessed 10 January 2020).

27 Robert M. Entman, "Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power," *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007): 163–73; Salma I. Ghanem and Maxwell McCombs, "The Convergence of Agenda Setting and Framing," in *Framing Public Life*, eds. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy Jr., and August E. Grant (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), 83–98.

28 Patrick Rössler, ed., *The International Encyclopedia of Media Effects,* 4 vols. (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 636.

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other relevant issues), helps political elites shape public opinion in a country.[29]

Some scholars who study issue framing suggest that individuals are expected to behave in a rational and self-interested manner.[30] Therefore, when faced with information that can inform their choices, people are expected to act in similarly patterned ways. Other scholars argue that individual behavior is less readily predictable than it has been suggested. People respond to the same situations or information in a variety of ways.[31] If the information is presented in a positive way, they tend to be more supportive and optimistic in their decision-making strategies. Alternatively, any information presented in a negative context leads to a less supportive behavior.[32] Thus, when it comes to influencing mass attitudes and political behavior, issue framing matters. In addition, people are more likely to support frames that are simple. Clarity in communication helps create frames that are easy to understand.

Saliency theory is also instrumental when it comes to understanding how issues are framed. The theory was designed to help explain electoral support for parties and candidates during elections in competitive democratic systems. Different candidates differentiate themselves by assigning varying degrees of importance to a range of voter concerns.[33] Since parties and candidates are unable to prioritize all of the issues due to their limited resources, they

29 Robert Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–58.

30 Lena Surzhko-Harned and Andrew J. Zahuranec, "Framing the Revolution: the Role of Social Media in Ukraine's Euromaidan Movement," *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 5 (2017): 759–79.

31 Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice," *Science* 211, no. 4481 (1981): 453–58.

32 Tversky and Kahneman, "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice."

33 Ian Budge, "A New Spatial Theory of Party Competition: Uncertainty, Ideology and Policy Equilibria Viewed Comparatively and Temporally," *British Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 4 (1994): 443–67; Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Richard Hofferbert, and Ian Budge, *Parties, Policies and Democracies* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994); Riccardo Pelizzo, "Party Positions or Party Direction? An Analysis of Party Manifesto Data," *West European Politics* 26, no. 2 (2003): 67–89; Simon Franzmann and Andre Kaiser, "Locating Political Parties in Policy Spaces: A Reanalysis of Party Manifesto Data," *Party Politics* 12, no. 2 (2006): 163–88.

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resort to manipulating the salience of some issues over all others. Political elites often switch from focusing on one relevant issue to another, depending on what they think would get them more support from voters.[34] Similarly, according to the "cue-taking" theory of representation, political elites might offer cues that shape voter preferences and beliefs.[35] People often rely on these cues when making a decision during elections. Thus, the rhetoric of political elites may serve as an issue framing.[36]

At the same time, research shows that people are not blind consumers of cues from the political elites, but rather they evaluate the trustworthiness of media personalities and positively respond to the rhetoric of those actors that they trust.[37] Credibility of sources matters.[38]

This analysis serves as the theoretical foundation for exploring how Russian media discourse shapes the image of key actors in the Donbas conflict through the use of narrative frames, manipulating issue saliency in the occupied Donbas and using issue framing to alienate the Donbas from the rest of Ukraine. Since credibility of media sources matters, the analysis includes television shows with the highest levels of credibility in ORDLO.[39]

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34 Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge, *Parties, Policies and Democracies*; Budge, "A New Spatial Theory of Party Competition."

35 Samuel L. Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Arthur Lupia and Mathew D. McCubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

36 Naila Hamdy and Ehab H. Gomaa, "Framing the Egyptian Uprising in Arabic Language Newspapers and Social Media," *Journal of Communication* 62, no. 2 (2012): 195–211.

37 Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*; James N. Druckman, "The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence," *Political Behavior* 23, no. 3 (2001): 225–56.

38 Specifically, the residents of the occupied Donbas have high levels of trust in the Russian media, which may be explained by the political and financial support Russia provides to the occupied region coinciding with the political and economic alienation of the occupied Donbas from the rest of Ukraine. The ongoing violent conflict with the Ukrainian military and the pro-Russian rhetoric of local leaders also play into the sources of credibility for the Russian media.

39 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 59.

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Active Measures and the War in the Donbas

Since the annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014, the Russian government has intensified activities aimed to manipulate international affairs through information warfare. These activities were prominent during the Soviet period when government officials have perfected the use of deception and falsification techniques, in the KGB's terms active measures, to advance the ideological influence of the Soviet Union.[40] Active measures are defined as "covert and deniable political influence and subversion operations, including (but not limited to) the establishment of front organizations, the backing of friendly political movements, the orchestration of domestic unrest and the spread of disinformation."[41] Russian active measures are designed to destabilize Western societies, undermine democratic institutions and Western values, curtail cooperation among NATO members and EU member states, legitimize the regime of President Putin, and allow Russia to re-establish its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space.[42] The targets of active measures are the countries in Russia's "near-abroad" (e.g., Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova), the EU states, and the United States.[43]

With regard to information manipulation, active measures are now used in both traditional and online media to advance Russia's foreign policy goals. Modern-day media in Russia are not completely state-controlled, yet national television channels with the

40 Steve Abrams, "Beyond Propaganda: Soviet Active Measures in Putin's Russia," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 15, no. 1 (2016): 5–31.

41 Mark Galeotti, "Active Measures: Russia's Covert Geopolitical Operations," George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, *Strategic Insights*, no. 31 (June 2019); also available at https://www.academia.edu/40219486/Active_Measures_Russias_Covert_Geopolitical_Operations (accessed 29 May 2020).

42 Jolanta Darczewska and Piotr Zochowski, "Active Measures. Russia's Key Export," *Point of View*, no. 64 (2017): 5–71; also available at https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/pw_64_ang_active-measures_net_0.pdf (accessed 21 February 2020).

43 Alina Polyakova and Spencer P. Boyer, "The Future of Political Warfare: Russia, the West, and the Coming Age of Global Digital Competition," *The New Geopolitics*, March 2018, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/fp_20180316_future_political_warfare.pdf (accessed 20 February 2020).

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widest coverage are loyal to the regime.[44] The Kremlin has the ability to manipulate media content on a regular basis.[45] Even before the Euromaidan revolution, major television channels in Russia have been used as "loudspeakers for the dominant ideology, supplanting any serious discussion of sociopolitical issues with derivative forms of entertainment."[46] This trend has intensified after 2014 as the Russian government spearheaded its media campaign aimed to discredit and delegitimize the new Ukrainian government using overt disinformation and subtle manipulation of media content.

Russia's active measures in Ukraine have been labeled as an element of hybrid warfare, a combination of military and non-military techniques of waging a war. Misinterpreting and fabricating facts serve as strategies of psychological subversion of the enemy. Thus, Russian media people often describe the actions of the Ukrainian military in the Donbas as "genocide" as they fabricate stories about mass killings, dismemberment, rape, and child crucifixions.[47] By spreading falsehoods, the Kremlin aims to advance pro-Russian propaganda and shape public opinion in the occupied Donbas. The fabricated stories are often pulled from the Internet but only after a large number of people have watched and shared

44 Maria Lipman, "Russia's Nongovernmental Media under Assault," *Demokratizatsiya* 22, no. 2 (2014): 179–90, also available at http://demokratizatsiya.pub/archives/22_2_FNN2114284170261.pdf (accessed 19 December 2019).

45 Scott Gehlbach, "Reflections on Putin and the Media," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2010): 77–87; Stephen Hutchings and Vera Tolz, "Fault Lines in Russia's Discourse of Nation: Television Coverage of the December 2010 Moscow Riots," *Slavic Review* 71, no. 4 (2012): 873–99.

46 Ulises A. Mejias and Nikolai E. Vokuev, "Disinformation and the Media: the Case of Russia and Ukraine," *Media, Culture & Society* 39, no. 7 (2017): 1030.

47 Paul Gregory, "Russian TV Propagandists Caught Red-Handed: Same Guy, Three Different People (Spy, Bystander, Heroic Surgeon)," *Forbes,* 12 April 2014, http://www.forbes.com/sites/paulroderickgregory/2014/04/12/russian-tv-caught-red-handed-same-guy same-demonstration-but-three-different-people-spy-bystander-heroic-surgeon (accessed 5 April 2020); Lucy Crossley, "The 'Aggrieved Housewife,' the 'Soldier's Mother' and the 'Kiev Resident': Did Russian Television 'Use Actress to Portray FIVE Different Women' As It Reported Normal Ukrainians Backed Kremlin," *Daily Mail*, 5 March 2014, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2574131/How-Russian-television-used-actress-pretend-five-different-people-opposed-revolution-reported-nor 'mal-Ukrainians-backed-Kremlin.html (accessed 5 April 2020).

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them.[48] Beyond the spread of falsehoods, Russian media channels rely on misquotes, rumors, and conspiracy theories to sow distrust, confusion, and uncertainty among the viewers.[49]

With the beginning of the Euromaidan protests in 2013, the most popular political shows like *Segodnia* (Today) and *Evening* have shifted their agenda to focus entirely on political events in Ukraine. The coverage of these events has been far from objective, relying on the rhetoric of divisiveness, suspicion, and aggression. Main television channels in Russia have been uniform in presenting the government in Kyiv as the agent of radical nationalists and neo-Nazi organizations. In 2014, the Euromaidan protesters were framed as Nazi sympathizers who engaged in a coup carefully orchestrated by the West.[50] The media also portrayed the Ukrainian military forces in the Donbas as sadists and "punishers."[51] Importantly, this anti-Ukrainian campaign in the Russian media worked to discredit any Ukrainian or Western sources of information in the Donbas as fake news and propaganda.

Popular political talk shows out of Russia use common tactics of manipulation, such as name-calling and testimonials.[52] Name-calling refers to the use of specific terms or labels (e.g., *banderovtsy* and *natsisty*) that are repeatedly used to discredit the opponent. Testimonials involve the participation of the broader public and pre-screened guests in political discussions to showcase the diversity of opinions and an unbiased nature of debate. Yet, the invited members from the opposition are usually underrepresented, re-

48 Halya Coynash, "Human Rights in Ukraine, Russia Today's 'Genocide in Eastern Ukraine': Sick, Distorted and Deleted," *Ukraine Business Online*, 16 July 2014, http://www.ukrainebusiness.com.ua/news/12512.html (accessed 3 April 2020).

49 Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, "The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money," *Institute of Modern Russia,* 2014, https://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev__The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf (accessed 5 April 2020).

50 Sweet, "Political Invasions into Collective Memories."

51 Halya Coynash, "Kremlin-Backed 'Republic' Bans Ukrainian Media," *Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group,* 16 November 2015, http://khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1447508942 (accessed 12 January 2020).

52 Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2005).

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peatedly interrupted, and openly mocked during the shows. Scholars have also noted the increased use of generalizations, exaggerations, emotional outbursts, swearing, and reliance on conspiracy theories in Russian political talk shows.[53] Studies show that viewers in Russia have mostly responded well to oversimplifications of complex political issues and the framing of international relations through the narrative of "us" versus "them."[54] As a result, shows like *Evening* and *60 Minutes* were the most watched political shows in Russia in recent years, with their hosts nominated for national television awards.[55] The Russian government has been using its state-controlled media to discredit Ukraine's post-revolutionary regime in the eyes of the Russian public, as well as the international community. Survey data suggest that the Russian audience was quite receptive to this propaganda with 85% of Russians having negative or very negative view of Ukraine's leaders.[56]

Not surprisingly, one of the first things that the leaders of the two "republics" in the occupied Donbas did in 2014 was restoring access to the Russian media and limiting exposure to the Ukrainian media.[57] Since television remains the main source of political news in the occupied Donbas (84%),[58] viewers have been consistently exposed to value-laden messages structured by the Russian regime.[59] Moreover, the residents of the occupied region report high levels of trust (87% of respondents) in Russian television. At the same time,

53 Vera Tolz and Yuri Teper, "Broadcasting Agitainment: a New Media Strategy of Putin's Third Presidency," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 34, no. 4 (2018): 213–27; Stefanie Ortmann and John Heathershaw, "Conspiracy Theories in the Post-Soviet Space," *The Russian Review* 71, no. 4 (2012): 551–64.

54 Tolz and Teper, "Broadcasting Agitainment."

55 "Nominatsii," *TEFI (Industrialnaia Televizionnaia Premiia),* 2019, https://tefitv.ru/nomination/nominations-2019/ (accessed 3 January 2020).

56 "Russia-Ukraine Relations," *Levada-Center: Yuri Levada Analytical Center*, 28 March 2019, https://www.levada.ru/en/2019/03/28/russia-ukraine-relations-4/ (accessed 10 January 2020).

57 Coynash, "Kremlin-Backed 'Republic' Bans Ukrainian Media."

58 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 56.

59 Halya Coynash, "Fakes and Lies about Ukraine Almost Double in Russian Proxy Donbas 'Republics'," *Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group*, 31 May 2019, http://khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1558749670 (accessed 15 January 2020).

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the trust in Ukrainian media is extremely low, with only 9% of respondents trusting the national media.[60] The high levels of public trust in the Russian media are important because they show the regime's ability to control public opinion in the occupied Donbas for a long time into the future. They may also be an indicator of success for the Kremlin's active measures.

Methods and Data

As mentioned earlier, discourse analysis, characterized by qualitative and constructionist interpretation of textual data, is used in this study to examine the content of narrative frames to which the residents of the "republics" are exposed through Russian television media. This method helps illuminate the meaning of the text and the categories and patterns that emerge from textual data.[61] Discursive rhetoric and issue framing reflect and shape political views, attitudes, and practices, serving to legitimize the acceptable norms in society and to disseminate information about a particular topic or issue.[62] Yet, discourse is not only about the dissemination of ideas but it also involves the construction of reality.[63] In the Donbas case, an analysis of discourse promoted by two most popular political shows on television reveals Russia's attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the Ukrainian authorities and to create a reality that helps it maintain political control in the occupied Donbas. To sharpen the analytical focus, the media content on the day of one key political event will be further examined.

60 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 56.

61 Cynthia Hardy, Bill Harley, and Nelson Phillips, "Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis: Two Solitudes," *Qualitative Methods* 2, no. 1 (2004): 19–22; also available at https://zenodo.org/record/998649#.XsOtAy2ZPdc (accessed 28 May 2020).

62 Natalia Moen-Larsen, '"Normal Nationalism': Alexei Navalny, LiveJournal and 'the Other'," *East European Politics* 30, no. 4 (2014): 548–67.

63 Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge, 1981), 51–78; Teun A. van Dijk, "Discourse, Power, and Access," in *Texts and Practices. Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. C. R. Caldas-Coulthard and M. Coulthard (London: Routledge, 1996), 84–104.

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On 9 December 2019, the leaders of four countries (Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France) met in Paris for the Normandy Four summit to discuss possible solutions to the Donbas conflict. It was the first time the leaders of Ukraine and Russia met since 2015. The event was extremely important to the residents of the Donbas. Focusing on the coverage of this event by two political shows, *Evening* and *60 Minutes*, with some of the highest rates of viewership in the region,[64] will help us observe the range of frames advanced in the Russian media to which the people in the "republics" were exposed.

Both shows are broadcast on Rossiia 1 channel. The channel is completely state-owned, and follows the official discourse of the Russian government.[65] In recent years, much scholarly attention was devoted to the ability of the Russian government to use the media instrumentally to attain certain goals.[66] Yet, some scholars pointed out that in fact several television shows and their hosts achieved a degree of autonomy and flexibility when framing particular events.[67] The Kremlin later chose to either embrace this framing or reject this interpretation of events. For example, in his evening show, *Voskresnyi Vecher* (Sunday Evening), Soloviov was the first to frame the Euromaidan revolution as a manifestation of radicalism and ethnic nationalism in Ukraine.[68] This frame and anti-Ukraine rhetoric were later picked up by other channels and became the core element of official discourse in Russia.

Evening is a show that revolves around its host Soloviov who engages in political debates using various formats, such as one-on-one interviews and round-table discussions. The stated goal of this political show is to present a multitude of viewpoints on the most

64 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi." The two programs were also the most popular shows in Russia in 2019. See "Nazvano samoie populiarnoie u rossiian politicheskoie tok shou," *Lenta.Ru*, 8 January 2020, https://lenta.ru/news/2020/01/08/top/ (accessed 28 May 2020).

65 Tolz and Teper, "Broadcasting Agitainment."

66 Tomila Lankina and Kohei Watanabe, "'Russian Spring' or 'Spring Betrayal'? The Media as a Mirror of Putin's Evolving Strategy in Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, no. 10 (2017): 1526–56; Joanna Szostek, "News Media Repertoires and Strategic Narrative Reception: a Paradox of Dis/Belief in Authoritarian Russia," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 1 (2016): 68–87.

67 Tolz and Teper, "Broadcasting Agitainment."

68 Ibid.

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pressing and contentious issues of the day.[69] *Evening* has been on air since 2005. It was initially broadcast on NTV channel as a weekend show. It was shut down for a number of years (2008–2012) and was returned to Rossiia 1 channel in September 2012. Since 2014, the show has increased its time on air, being broadcast five times a week with a longer time slot for the Sunday program.[70]

60 Minutes was launched in September 2016 with the hosts Yevgenii Popov and Olga Skabeieva. The program has been conceived as a discussion show, focusing on relevant issues of the day and featuring the hosts and the invited guests. The topics include both domestic issues and international events. Typically, the guests of this show are politicians, members of civil society organizations, and experts on the topics featured in each show. *60 Minutes* runs daily Monday through Friday. In 2017, the show expanded to two broadcasts a day (one in the afternoon and the other in the evening).[71] Due to their use of misinformation, hate speech, and anti-Ukraine rhetoric, both *Evening* and *60 Minutes* have been temporarily banned not only in Ukraine but in some Baltic countries as well.[72]

On 9 December 2019, Rossiia 1 broadcast two *60 Minutes* shows and one *Evening* show that lasted for 3 hours and 13 minute. All three broadcasts focused on the Normandy Four summit in Paris.

69 "Vecher s Vladimirom Soloviovym," *Russia 1 Channel,* 2020, https://russia.tv/brand/show/brand_id/21385/?utm_source=search&utm_campaign=autocomplete (accessed 28 May 2020).

70 Tolz and Teper, "Broadcasting Agitainment."

71 "Tok-shou '60 Minut' budet vykhodit dva raza v den," *Russia 1 Channel*, 22 August 2017, https://russia.tv/article/show/article_id/34192/brand_id/60851/type_id/3/ (accessed 28 May 2020).

72 "Latvian Broadcast Regulator Hits Russian Channel with 3-Month Ban," *Latvian Public Broadcasting*, 31 January 2019, https://eng.lsm.lv/article/culture/culture/latvian-broadcast-regulator-hits-russian-channel-with-3-month-ban.a307942/ (accessed 3 January 2020).

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Analysis and Discussion

Ukraine as a State

In describing Ukraine as a state, both television shows placed a particular emphasis on violence and chaos as the new norm. Rising nationalism and widespread radicalism were repeatedly mentioned as an issue since the beginning of the Euromaidan. Discussing the developments in Ukraine on the eve of the summit, the host of *60 Minutes* Yevgenii Popov reinforced the image of mob rule as Ukraine's norm by mentioning a public gathering on the Maidan the day before the summit. The Maidan rally was organized by several political parties with notable speakers, such as the former President Petro Poroshenko, a staunch opponent of negotiating with President Putin. Approximately 2,000 people gathered peacefully in the heart of Kyiv to call on Zelenskyi not to give concessions to Putin in the upcoming summit.[73] The image of the peaceful rally, however, was distorted by Popov on his afternoon show. He stated: "By evening, the radicals were burning fires on the main square."[74] Survey data out of the occupied Donbas have demonstrated that most residents of the two "republics" agree with this rhetoric of widespread radical activity in Ukraine. When asked who the two "republics" were at war with, over 23% of respondents named Ukrainian fascists and another 15% of respondents named nationalists and Nazis.[75]

Some of the invited guests on the *Evening* show went further, predicting a collapse of Ukraine's statehood. They mentioned the Maidan events of 2013–2014 as the first step in Ukraine's self-destruction. According to one guest, Sergei Kurginian, the leader of the political movement "Essence of Time," Ukraine's political future was bleak. He claimed that the country would likely cease to exist completely or may turn into a dictatorship in the future.

73 Natalia Datskevych and Kostyantyn Chernichkin, "Thousands Gather on Maidan for 'Red Lines for Zelensky' Rally before Normandy Talks," *Kyiv Post*, 8 December 2019, https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/thousands-gather-on-maidan-for-red-lines-for-zelensky-rally-before-normandy-talks.html (accessed 28 May 2020).

74 Yevgenii Popov on *60 Minutes*, 9 December 2019 (afternoon show).

75 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 62.

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Kurginian primarily blamed Ukraine's political elites in charting the country's course to self-destruction: "If the Ukrainian elites, through their collective efforts, lead the Ukrainian state to collapse, then every country will face the question of what should be done in this post-statehood period, and how to dispose of the results of this self-destruction."[76] As evidence of this looming collapse, the invited guests mentioned Ukraine's economic issues, the prospects of losing energy transit to Europe, and the lack of collective identity in Ukraine. The participants often relied on personal speculations and verbal attacks directed at the Ukrainian guests on the show. At one point, Soloviov suggested that one of the invited Ukrainian guests could not interpret from Ukrainian to Russian, making a generalization that Ukrainians could barely speak their own language.

Beyond political chaos and instability in Ukraine, the discussion on the *Evening* show reinforced the saliency of Ukraine's economic weakness and indebtedness. In addressing one of the Ukrainian guests on his show, Soloviov said: "… your country will never pay back its debts. You are the beggars in debt."[77] Other guests on the show supported Soloviov's opinion, also emphasizing that there could be no hope for future economic improvements in Ukraine, unless the country completely reshaped its foreign policy and returned to the Kremlin's orbit. This idea was paralleled by the results of the recent survey data, which indicated that the residents of the "republics" were extremely pessimistic with regard to the economic situation in Ukraine. Overall, 44% of respondents felt that the economic situation in the country got worse in 2019. Similarly, most residents of the occupied Donbas did not expect the economic situation in Ukraine would improve in the year ahead. These indicators are important since the respondents also named socio-economic issues and unemployment among the reasons for leaving the Donbas in the future.[78] Highlighting Ukraine's economic weakness may play into the goal of the Kremlin to keep the "republics" away

76 Sergei Kyrginian on *Evening*, 9 December 2019.
77 Vladimir Soloviov on *Evening*, 9 December 2019.
78 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 30.

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from Ukraine as the Donbas residents are unlikely to support reintegration if they perceive Ukraine as a country with a failing economy.

Ultimately, both television shows accentuated the idea of Ukraine as a failing and immature state with perennial political and economic problems. This emphasis on Ukraine's weaknesses corresponds to the public opinion trends in the occupied Donbas as most people (80.5%) in the region reported being against the idea of reintegration with Ukraine.[79]

The Ukrainian People

Both television shows portrayed the Ukrainian people in a negative light. The narratives that the shows promoted included Ukrainians depicted as radicals who were brainwashed by their government and who were committed to personal enrichment above all. The term *banderovtsy* was used on multiple occasions to describe radical nationalists in Ukraine by referencing Ukraine's nationalist groups who allegedly collaborated with Nazi Germany during the Second World War. The anti-Russian attitudes among the Ukrainian people were attributed to anti-Russian propaganda carried out by the Kyiv government. According to Popov in *60 Minutes*, "even if these people [Ukrainians] were told that they have a 30% gas discount, they would still be unhappy about it—this is how much they are brainwashed by their leaders."[80] This comment alluded to the agreement signed by President Putin and former President Yanukovych in December 2013, offering the Ukrainian government a discount on energy imports from Russia. The agreement failed to appease the Maidan protesters. Popov suggested that the processes of rational thinking and decision-making among Ukrainians were clouded by the radical forces' and politicians' anti-Russian propaganda in Ukraine. This rhetoric inevitably shapes the ORDLO residents' attitudes toward Ukrainian politicians and, as the survey has shown, the levels of trust and faith in the Ukrainian political elites are indeed extremely low in the occupied Donbas.[81]

79 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 37.
80 Yevgenii Popov on *60 Minutes*, 9 December 2019 (afternoon show).
81 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 16–20.

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On the same show, one of the invited guests, Russian political scientist Aleksei Martynov, argued that the Ukrainian people participated in anti-government protests only because they were paid to do so. While commenting on people's gathering on the Maidan on the eve of the summit, Martynov stated: "I think this story with Maidan depends only on how much money will be delivered there. If they bring another couple of million [dollars], then we will see 10, 20, and 100 thousand people protesting."[82] On his *Evening* show, Soloviov repeatedly suggested that Ukrainians have no loyalty to their country and would be ready to sell all of their land and their people if the price was right. Soloviov questioned a Ukrainian guest about the reasons behind Ukraine's continuous trade with Russia: "I cannot understand. You claim you are fighting with us and we are the aggressor. Then why are you transiting our gas? We use these revenues to fill our budget and strengthen our military."[83] In reference to Ukrainians, Soloviov concluded: "You will sell your own mother for 20 kopeks."[84] This rhetoric tapped into the idea advanced in the Russian media since the early days of the Euromaidan, and suggests that Ukrainians have turned to the West and away from Russia due to the expectations of higher financial gains, not because Ukrainians were interested in democracy, European values, or preserving their sovereignty. Clearly, the show hosts were dismissive toward the views and comments of their Ukrainian guests who were often interrupted and ridiculed during the shows. At one point, Soloviov interrupted Viacheslav Kovtun, a Ukrainian guest who mentioned the stagnation of the Russian economy. Soloviov dismissed Kovtun's comment by stating: "You are in hysteria again. You are once again shaking and itching. Calm down, we will deal with our own affairs."[85]

Overall, the Russian television shows were promoting the image of the Ukrainian people as divided into two general groups, the radical nationalists and the brainwashed masses. Likely, the residents of the Donbas are not going to identify with any of these

82 Aleksei Martynov on *60 Minutes*, 9 December 2019 (afternoon show).
83 Vladimir Soloviov on *Evening*, 9 December 2019.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.

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groups, which helps advance a narrative that the people in the "republics" do not share the same sense of identity with the Ukrainian people. To a certain extent, public opinion in the occupied Donbas reflects this frame. For example, a large percentage of the residents (particularly in the DNR, 69%) agreed that the rights of Russian language speakers were undermined in Ukraine. In addition, 46% of respondents in the two "republics" agreed that the annexation of Crimea was legal and served to protect Russian-speaking citizens in the region.[86]

Ukraine's Leaders

The two television shows also targeted Ukrainian government officials who were framed as incompetent, corrupt, and irrational. Specifically, the hosts and the guests on both shows used negative references and insults, calling Ukrainian politicians thugs (reference to corruption), tourists (reference to laziness), *porokhoboty* (reference to nationalism),[87] freaks, and imitators of policymaking (reference to incompetence). In addition, the guests of *60 Minutes* claimed that Ukraine's government officials were emotionally unstable and could not be taken seriously during high level negotiations. On his show, Soloviov went even further, arguing that some Ukrainian government officials (e.g., the Minister of Internal Affairs, Arsen Avakov) collaborated with nationalists and perpetuated bloodshed in the Donbas. He also used the term "government schizophrenia" to describe the prisoner exchange that Ukraine's leaders discussed in Paris. In Soloviov's words, "Ukraine is the only country in the world that decides to negotiate with Russia to exchange Ukrainians for Ukrainians."[88] This comment was part of an ongoing rhetoric with regard to framing the Donbas war as Ukraine's internal conflict. Soloviov also mentioned that Ukraine's leaders needed to

86 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 31.

87 The Russians portrayed President Poroshenko as a nationalist. The origin of the term (*porokhoboty*) has to do with Poroshenko's nick name "Porokh." This term is used in reference to those who support Poroshenko.

88 Vladimir Soloviov on *Evening*, 9 December 2019.

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abandon their anti-Russian rhetoric since it hurt the relations between the two countries and further undermined Ukraine's economy.

On the day of the summit, the Russian media also specifically zoned in on Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyi. The framing of Zelenskyi did not differ much from how the Russian media generally depicted the Ukrainian political leadership. Zelenskyi was identified as a populist and a goof who was inexperienced, controlled by radical nationalists, weak when it came to negotiations, and unwilling and incapable of bringing peace to the Donbas. One particular point of criticism targeted the President's legitimacy as the leader in his own country. On his show, Soloviov and his guests suggested that for Zelenskyi the summit was less intimidating because of Western leaders' presence. They mocked him for being so scared of the Russian president that he should have worn a diaper. Also, the show host repeatedly diminished Zelenskyi for his inability to enforce his military orders in the Donbas and to make decisions unilaterally. Consulting his government and the Ukrainian people was characterized as political weakness, and the process of democratic policy-making as messy and destabilizing. The criticism of Zelenskyi was coupled with the praise for the strength and stability of Putin's model of governance. Finally, noticeably angered by Zelenskyi's reference to the Donbas as Ukraine's "occupied" territory during the summit, Kurginian and other guests on Soloviov's show used the language of insults to equate Zelenskyi's foreign policy with that of Poroshenko. Overall, both shows concluded that Zelenskyi failed to negotiate a ceasefire and did not deliver on his promises to the Ukrainian people.

Survey data out of the occupied Donbas reflect people's low levels of trust in Ukraine's political elites. Not a single Ukrainian politician (even the pro-Russian political leaders) was viewed favorably by the majority of residents in the region. The former President of Ukraine Poroshenko was disliked by almost 95% of the respondents in ORDLO. Similarly, most respondents did not trust President Zelenskyi, particularly in the LNR where over 90% of respondents held negative views of him. The majority of respondents did not believe Zelenskyi was capable of successfully negotiating

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with Russia and bringing peace to the Donbas (over 85% of respondents found this to be very unlikely or unlikely).[89] The Russian media's framing of Ukraine's political elites is designed to delegitimize Ukraine as a state in the eyes of the Donbas residents. It is improbable that the residents of the "republics" would want to return to the country controlled by the leaders who are viewed as incompetent, corrupt, and manipulated by "neo-Nazi" groups. Transparently, the objective of the Russian media is to construct a certain image of the Ukrainian state, an image of an unstable entity, mired in violence and incapable of managing the Donbas.

The Occupied Donbas

One of the core narratives on the two television shows focused on labeling the Donbas conflict as Ukraine's "civil war" that was initiated by the Ukrainian government. Both shows advocated for the end of the Donbas conflict by achieving political autonomy from Ukraine. Ultimately, the Russian media advanced the idea that the Ukrainian government should be negotiating with the leaders of the "republics" directly, without any involvement of foreign states. A Ukrainian guest on *60 Minutes* and a journalist with clear anti-Ukrainian attitudes, Aleksandr Semchenko, stated: "We are forgetting who is fighting whom in the Donbas … without coordination with DNR and LNR, no agreement is realistic."[90]

In his *Evening* show, Soloviov addressed President Zelenskyi and offered to personally take him to the occupied Donbas and introduce him to the leaders of the two "republics," so that negotiations could take place. The contradictory nature of this narrative frame was evident. Actively discussing the conflict in the Donbas, the hosts either completely ignored the involvement of the Russian

89 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 21.

90 Aleksandr Semchenko on *60 Minutes*, 9 December 2019 (evening show). For more details about blogger and journalist Semchenko, see Gala Skliarevskaia, "Zachem Aleksandru Semchenko provokatsionnyi videoblog?," *Detektor Media*, 26 December 2017, https://detector.media/kritika/article/133254/2017-12-26-zachem-aleksandru-semchenko-provokatsionnyi-videoblog/ (accessed 6 June 2020).

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state in the occupied region or portrayed it as a form of "humanitarian assistance." They, however, routinely emphasized that the Donbas war had been Ukraine's internal conflict and could only be resolved if the Ukrainian government negotiated with the local leaders directly. The survey data from ORDLO reflects the residents' general agreement with this framing of the conflict in the Donbas. Over 76% of respondents in the recent survey agreed that the Donbas conflict was a civil war, and approximately 90% of respondents agreed that Russia did not initiate the war in the Donbas. When asked to name those responsible for the Donbas conflict, among the most common responses were the post-Maidan government (96%), the Maidan protesters (86%), the Ukrainian government under Yanukovych (80%), the U.S. (79%), and the EU (77%).[91]

The role of Russia in the conflict was framed in an ambiguous manner. Both shows rejected the idea that Russia had initiated or instigated the conflict. At the same time, the hosts and the guests often discussed Russia's commitment to defending the Donbas people, supporting them financially and preventing what was described as a "possibility of genocide." On one occasion, while commenting on Ukraine's general Ruslan Khomchak as the one who wanted to retake the Donbas from the Russians, the host of *60 Minutes* Popov suggested that the occupied "republics" historically belonged to Russia.[92] Another episode on the same show illuminated a general consensus among the guests who believed that if Putin recognized the Donbas as part of Russia, the residents of the Donbas would immediately support his decision. This comment met no opposition from the host who supported the concept of Donbas being integrated into Russia. Survey results from this region are generally consistent with the idea expressed on television: when asked about the future status of the two "republics," 51% of respondents supported the integration. Only 5% of respondents preferred future re-integration into Ukraine (without any special status accommodations).[93]

91 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 36.
92 Yevgenii Popov on *60 Minutes*, 9 December 2019 (evening show).
93 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 37.

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Both television shows also advanced ambiguous rhetoric with regard to the future of the Donbas. They advocated for its political autonomy within Ukraine, yet also emphasized the idea that reintegration could not be possible because Ukraine's "radical nationalists" would use the ceasefire as an opportunity to recapture the region and reintegrate the Donbas by force. Soloviov described Arsen Avakov (Ukraine's Minister of Internal Affairs) as the leader of nationalists and a "punisher" who was "elbow-deep in blood," and would likely be put in charge of the reintegration process in the Donbas. Soloviov ultimately sent a message to Ukraine by addressing one of the Ukrainians on his show with "Leave the Donbas alone."[94] Popov on *60 Minutes* also directly questioned the feasibility of the Donbas's reintegration into Ukraine because of the threat of Ukrainian radicals. He used the example of Paris where some Ukrainian radicals publicly tore and burned Russian flags, and the flags of the DNR and the LNR before the Normandy Four summit. In an extremely assertive way, both shows advanced the idea that due to extreme nationalism in Ukraine, reintegration would translate into more violence in the Donbas.

In terms of the solutions to the Donbas crisis, the shows also lacked clarity. Some guests on the shows defended the idea of the Donbas's political autonomy within Ukraine and this, in their view, would resolve the conflict. Political expert Dmitrii Abzalov on the *Evening* show argued that following the Minsk Agreements would be vital in this process, because these agreements would protect the Donbas residents from political persecution and violence. Exaggerating the threat of violence, he stated: "If we accept the status quo without these points [Minsk Agreements], there will be another Croatia. That is, people will be slaughtered out there … as they were slaughtered in Rwanda."[95] Others discussed the benefits of the current status quo in the Donbas, alluding that the "republics" were controlled by Russia. For instance, Kurginian on the *Evening* show claimed that both Russia and the "republics" benefitted from the current stalemate because it enhanced the legitimacy of the new

94 Vladimir Soloviov on *Evening with Vladimir Soloviov*, 9 December 2019.
95 Dmitrii Abzalov on *Evening with Vladimir Soloviov*, 9 December 2019.

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institutions in the Donbas and strengthened the Donbas identity. In his words, "this status quo means that the Donbas becomes more and more separated from the existing *banderovite* Ukraine."[96]

The current status quo was also linked to economic benefits for the Donbas. Ukraine's economic blockade of the "republics" had been portrayed as evidence of Ukrainians abandoning the region, and thus the Russian government's financial support, offered to the two "republics," seemed humane and legitimate. According to some estimates, approximately 70% of the DNR's budget has been funded by the Russian government. Moscow's humanitarian assistance has been used to cover salaries, pensions, and social welfare payments.[97] On his show, Soloviov argued that the Donbas people were financially better off than people living in the rest of Ukraine. He reinforced the idea that Russia would continue helping the "republics" politically and financially. The survey data from the occupied region suggest that most of the Donbas residents (35% overall and 51% in the DNR) hoped that the economic situation would improve in the future as a result of integration with Russia.[98] It is interesting, however, that extensively discussing the idea of political and economic benefits of the status quo in the Donbas, the two shows neglected to address one of the most important economic issues for the residents of the Donbas,—the reconstruction of the region.

What is more, both shows advanced the idea that the Ukrainian government was not interested in reaching a peace agreement in the region. The hosts discussed Ukraine's refusal to exchange prisoners as well as the intention of Ukraine's politicians to violate the Minsk Agreements and the terms of the ceasefire. Ultimately, the Russian media reinforced the saliency of the argument that the Ukrainian government did not care about the lives of the Donbas residents and ignored the voices of the Donbas leaders. The blame for the beginning of the Donbas conflict, its lethality, and its continuation was placed exclusively on the Ukrainian side.

96 Sergei Kyrginian on *Evening with Vladimir Soloviov*, 9 December 2019.

97 Anna Matveeva, "No Moscow Stooges: Identity Polarization and Guerrilla Movements in Donbass," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies,* no. 16 (2016): 25–50.

98 "Sotsialno-politychni nastroi," 14.

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Crucially, behind this rhetoric, Russia is trying to hide massive propaganda efforts and active measures in the region that bore fruit: today great numbers of the residents in the two Donbas "republics" want them to be integrated with Russia. Examples of these efforts are numerous and discussed elsewhere: the Russian Federation issued Russian passports to Ukrainian citizens in the Donbas in violation of their constitutional rights, distributed apartments to turncoats who betrayed Ukraine, and participated in three prisoner swaps that have left most Ukrainian hostages in Russian captivity. Most importantly, Russia, the aggressor, does not allow Ukrainian journalists to cover either these exchanges or any other developments in the territories controlled by the DNR and LNR.

Conclusion

The quotation from Putin's public speech offered at the beginning of this chapter opens a window into a better understanding of Russian-Ukrainian relations and Russian active measures. This chapter has demonstrated that there is an enormous and obvious discrepancy between Putin's public statements about Ukrainians and that of the Russian journalists working for the state-sponsored television channels. Hostilities toward and disinformation about Ukraine that are promoted by Putin's admirers, such as Soloviov, on Russian television leaves no space for logical reconciliation between Putin's definition of Ukraine as a "brotherly nation" and the approaches adopted by the Russian media. Importantly, Russian active measures, specifically media manipulation and disinformation, that shed a negative light on Ukraine and its policies, as well as on the Ukrainians and their leaders, shape narratives and construct realities that considerably influence the worldviews of the residents of the "republics" in the occupied Donbas. Through the prism of saliency theory, this study illuminated the Russian media's tactics of enhancing the saliency of certain issues to win the hearts and minds of the Donbas residents. Discourse analysis of the issue framing in the two most popular television programs in ORDLO (*60 Minutes* and *Evening*) during the December 2019 Normandy Four negotiations has revealed how the Russian media are shaping the daily news coverage

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to influence perceptions and sentiments of the viewers in the occupied Donbas. This study does not advance specific causal claims; yet, it shows how the salient concerns of the ORDLO residents may be further amplified by the content of the media frames.

The findings also demonstrate how skillfully both television shows advanced a uniformly anti-Ukrainian agenda by using direct and provoking communication style. The hosts and the guests on both shows linked the Normandy Four summit to key political and socio-economic concerns of the ORDLO residents. The two television shows with the widest coverage in the region constructed and solidified the image of Ukraine as a collapsing state, the Ukrainian government as corrupt and weak, and the Ukrainian people as radicals manipulated by their government. The occupied Donbas was framed through contradicting discourse. On the one hand, the residents of the "republics" were framed as brave freedom fighters and honest people who demanded independence and looked forward to peace. On the other hand, the discussions conveyed the image of the occupied Donbas as a region completely loyal to Russia and dependent on the Kremlin. The discussion about potential solutions to the conflict was also ambiguous, which is suggestive of two scenarios: either the Kremlin intends to preserve the status quo in the region or the leaders of Russia do not have a clear strategy in the occupied Donbas.

The Russian political shows consistently manipulated ethnolinguistic prejudices and delivered false, manipulative, and hyperbolized statements. Public opinion in the Donbas corresponds to these narratives, which might suggest that Russian television media is an extremely effective tool that helps advance Russia's goals in the Donbas. Disinformation is only part of non-conventional warfare that the Russian state has been using against Ukraine. Understanding the sources of anti-Ukrainian attitudes in the occupied Donbas could be helpful for the Ukrainian government in developing soft power non-military approaches to regain legitimacy and trust of the Donbas residents. The soft power approaches might include support for democratic reforms and economic stability in the occupied Donbas, something that the Russian government has not been able to deliver. However, the Kremlin's firm control over the media space in the region might prevent the Ukrainian government

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from making any steps in any foreseeable future that might help recover the lost territory. Thus, the scenario advanced by some scholars in which Ukraine's authorities disengage from the areas they no longer control and instead fully focus on revitalizing the Ukrainian economy, without the Donbas's contribution, seems to be an increasingly attractive option for Ukraine.[99]

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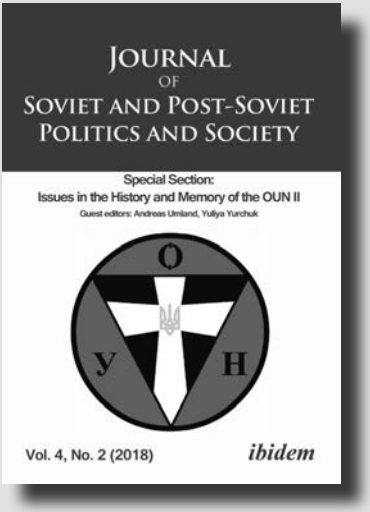

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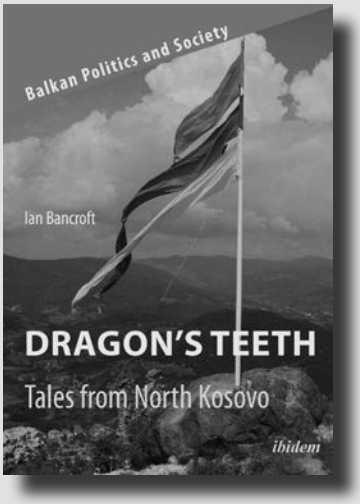

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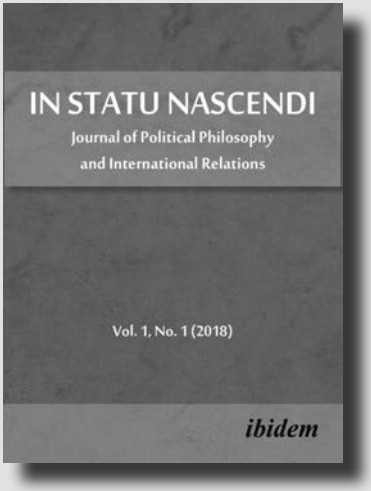

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